

# **A COUNTRY OF WORDS**

The revival of mak yong theatrical performance and Malay  
identity formation in Indonesia's Riau Islands

Dissertation

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## List of Abbreviations

APBD	: Anggaran Pendapatan dan Belanja Daerah (local budget)
ASTI	: Akademi Seni Tari Indonesia (Indonesian School of Dance)
ATL	: Asosiasi Tradisi Lisan (Oral Tradition Association)
BP Batam	: Badan Pengusahaan Kawasan Perdagangan Bebas dan Pelabuhan Bebas Batam/BP Batam (Batam Indonesia Free Trade Zone Authority)
BAPPEDA	: Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Daerah (Department of Regional Development Planning)
BPNB	: Balai Pelestarian Nilai Budaya (Institute for the Preservation of Cultural Values)
BPS	: Badan Pusat Statistik (Indonesian Institute of Statistics)
DMDI	: Dunia Melayu Dunia Islam (Malay World—Islamic World)
GAPENA	: Gabungan Persatuan Penulis Nasional (Federation of National Writer Associations of Malaysia)
GSMS	: Gerakan Seniman Masuk Sekolah (Artists in Schools Movement)
ICH	: Intangible Cultural Heritage
IKJ	: Institut Kesenian Jakarta (Jakarta Institute for the Arts)
LAM	: Lembaga Adat Melayu (Institute of Malay Traditions)
LIPI	: Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia (Indonesian Institute of Sciences)
LPKJ	: Lembaga Pendidikan Kesenian Jakarta (Jakarta Arts Education Institute)
MOW	: Memory of the World
SMA	: Sekolah Menengah Atas (Senior High School)
SMK	: Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan (Senior High Vocational School)
SMP	: Sekolah Menengah Pertama (Junior High School)
SPG	: Sekolah Pendidikan Guru (Teacher's Training College)

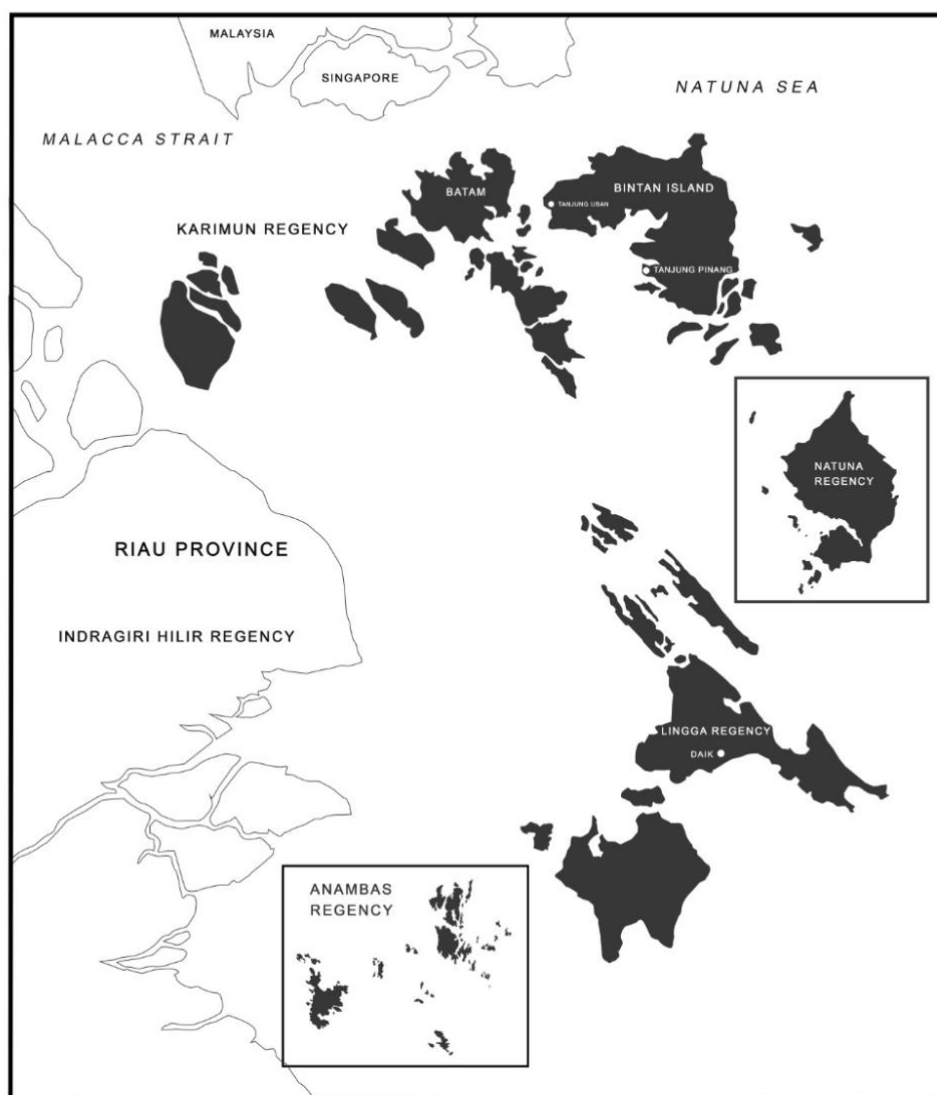


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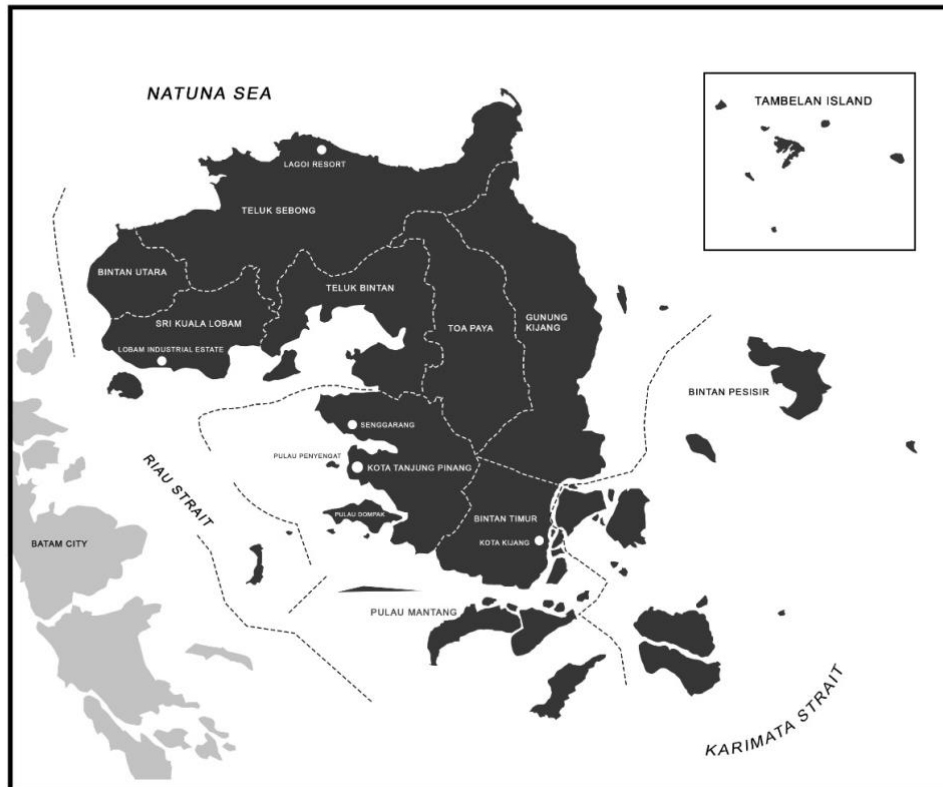
## Maps

### THE RIAU ISLANDS PROVINCE



Source: Peta Wilayah Provinsi Kepulauan Riau (BPS 2020b: v), edited by Alan Darmawan.

## BINTAN REGENCY AND ITS VICINITY



Source: Peta Administratif Kabupaten Bintan 2009 (BPS 2017a: vii), edited by Alan Darmawan.

## LINGGA REGENCY



Source: Peta Wilayah Kabupaten Lingga (BPS 2017b: v), edited by Alan Darmawan.

## Introduction

What is broken will re-grow,  
what disappears will be replaced.<sup>1</sup>

The words above read like an oath. Many ascribe it to the legendary hero, Hang Tuah. It pledges that the Malays and their culture will last forever. Even though some Malays could disappear, others will replace them. This oath serves as a lens to see reality: Melaka fell, Johor emerged, and so did the Riau-Lingga Sultanate after that. Both the oath and the reality illustrate revival and regeneration. This is the focus of this dissertation. The people on the islands situated south of the Singapore Strait have experienced multifaceted historical trajectories, from being in the heartland of Malay culture to the backwater area of the Indonesian province of Riau. However, arduous struggle gave rise to the new province of Kepulauan Riau or the Riau Islands (“Kepri”). Obtaining new administrative status in 2004, the Riau Islands have been defining what should be its core culture, collective self-image, and cultural representation that can unite the islanders. In this formation of identity, the Riau Islands looks at the history to connect with, and claim to be the heir of, the prestigious Malay emporium Melaka.

It is the engagement with the past in which the local governments (provincial and districts), cultural activists, and artists become active agents promoting physical remnants, historical narratives, and traditional culture as heritage that carry stories about, and cultural practices from, the past into the present. They revive mostly oral traditions that they consider to be the most “authentic” form of culture. The revival of tradition is to return traditional practices to life and perform them at heritage sites through cultural festivals to attract tourists, to teach children, to create bonds within communities, to shape identity, and, most of all, to reconstruct a cultural realm. It is the corpus of narratives, both history and tales, that have been revived to recreate a world of stories. It is words that shape the world of stories, an entity in the imagination of a Malay country, a “country of words.” This study focuses on the efforts of the above-mentioned agents to make sense of place of the Riau Islands in reference to the stories, to shape collective identity markers, and make people feel of being or becoming Malay.

Traditional art forms help to instantiate the world of stories through bodily performance regarded as the embodiment of Malayness. The art forms provide diverse images of Malay traditions in such a process, such as animistic, aristocratic, and religious Islam. So then, which traditional art forms do the local authorities, cultural activists, and performers select and elevate to configure Malay identity and the cultural realm? How does the revival of tradition play roles in the formation of Malay identity? How do attempts to promote Malayness as a dominant cultural identity among diverse ethnic groups in the Riau Islands take place? The task of

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<sup>1</sup> Translation from the Malay expression: *patah tumbuh hilang berganti*. In the whole dissertation, all translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

this study is to uncover the sociocultural processes of identity formation and world-making. These processes are both performative and discursive practices.

Among the many art forms in the Riau Islands, the local authorities, Malay activists, and artists focused on mak yong theatre as one of distinctive identity markers. They reinvented the art form and revived it to become a regular occurrence at cultural events, listed on the Indonesian national heritage list, and promoted for global recognition. From the perspective of the anthropology of experience, performing art should be looked at as an expression of human experience, which takes a certain form to be conveyed and subsequently shapes human experience. It is through performance that a community re-experiences, re-lives, re-creates, re-tells, and re-constructs its culture. The revival of mak yong, in this sense, has put “experience into circulation” (Turner and Bruner 1986: 11–12). This study deals with the contemporary mak yong theatre production that takes part in shaping the Malay cultural realm in Riau Islands.

Mak yong reflects general characteristics of theatre in Southeast Asia, which revolves around nobles with their clown-servants. It focuses on the divine king and prince who are the heroes in the play and act in a close relationship with the gods (Brandon 1974: 122–23). However, the art form has developed in a particular context of Malay communities and has been embedded in their performing tradition. It manifests through stage performance a cosmological concept of the heavenly kingdom and its pantheon, which are based in the life setting of an earthly kingdom. The stories play through the main characters: king and prince (Pak Yong), queen and princess (Mak Yong), royal attendants (Awang and Inang Pengasuh), and other dramatis personae. The play presents several settings—a royal palace, village, jungle, and the sea—with typical Malay names. The orchestra consists of musical instruments from the Malay music tradition, as well as songs and dialogues in the Malay language. The traditional pattern of movements forms mak yong dances. Complimentary to this, two ritual practices open and close mak yong performances.

Traditionally, a mak yong performance starts with a prelude, a ritual-like dance and song before the three-string fiddle called *mengadap rebab*. The prelude aims to give respect to the *guru* (literally, teacher), which also means spiritual being, a signifying feature of shamanistic rituals. Mak yong’s play departs from this sequence that structures the main part of the performance. Unlike dance drama *menora*, which derives its form from Buddhist *Jataka* stories about heroine Manora (Brandon 1974: 23–24; Nasuruddin 2009: 53) and *mendu* theatre, which plays the single story on *Dewa Mandu* (Syahidin Badru 1999; Chambert-Loir 1980; Thomas 2016: 327), mak yong has a repertoire of magical adventure stories. Scholars who have grounded their research on Kelantanese mak yong structure twelve stories in a “tree” model derived from *Dewa Muda* as the base story (*cerita pangkal*) (Hardwick 2013: 90; Yousof 1982a: 111–12). Such a stemma does not occur as an aspect of mak yong tradition in the Riau Islands; instead, it is a collection of stories that forms a repertoire of the art form. Several of the most frequently performed

plays at festivals include *Raja Bungsu Sakti*, *Putri Timun Muda*, *Raja Lak Kenarong*, *Wak Perambun*, and *Putri Siput Gondang*.<sup>2</sup> In history, this dramatic form flourished in several social settings that shape contexts for its presence as a folk, court, and commercial entertainment. To understand mak yong's revival, we should view it as part of the traditions in a certain period of history, which had thrived, declined, and some of which has since been revived.

Despite a lack of records about mak yong's emergence, several literary works indicate the indigenous perception of the art form as part of the old folk tradition. The nineteenth-century chronicle *Hikayat Seri Kelantan* tells about mak yong as one of the art forms that was prohibited to be performed in Kelantan by the 1880s (Mohd Taib 2004: 38, 70). The ban gave the rulers a respected reputation for their perceived piety, although it was ineffective (Andaya and Andaya 1982: 194). By contrast, the mid-nineteenth-century chronicle, *Hikayat Pahang*, recounts a celebration in which mak yong, as celebrated folk entertainment, was performed in a wooden shed called *bangsal*. The event also staged menora, wayang, gambling (*judi*), and cockfighting (*sabung ayam*) and was held in conjunction with the visit of Bendahara of Pahang Wan Ahmad to Chenor in the interior one day during his tenure (1863–1882). In order to welcome the bendahara, the local ruler and people of Chenor organised a feast over the course of a few days during the visit (Kalthum Jeran 1986: 66–9). Another account from *Sejarah Peperangan Tuk Janggut di Kelantan*<sup>3</sup> mentions that mak yong was favoured by people and nobles alike in the upstream area of Kelantan in the early twentieth century. The chronicle introduces the titular hero and covers his family background to accentuate his bravery and that of his father's own rebellion. His father, Panglima Munas, was a guardian of the local chief, Tengku Seri Maharaja Tua Jeram, who had a beloved concubine named Wan Seri Bulan. Munas persuaded her to leave the palace at night to attend a mak yong performance. His intentions were to seek revenge and rebel against the Maharaja, who ignored his appeal for help regarding the murder of his eldest son (Hamdan Aziz 2016: 12–13; Cheah 2006: 52–53). Munas' deception works due to the attractiveness of the art form, which he uses to seduce Wan Seri Bulan.

As folk entertainment, mak yong entered the Malay court and was developed under the patronage of several kingdoms. In Kelantan, a high-ranking official

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<sup>2</sup> *Raja Bungsu Sakti* recounts a story about Prince of Negeri Lenggang Cahaya, who wanders to Negeri Gunung Berintan and gets married to the princess of the kingdom. *Putri Timun Muda* recounts a story about a princess whose husband is instructed by the king to hunt a deer for him. The princess accompanies her husband in the jungle. There her husband is killed by the antagonistic people of the forest, but is then saved by the god Betala Guru. *Raja Lak Kenarong* features a story about a prince (and his mother) who is driven out from the palace by the king at the behest of his new wife (who is an incarnation of a genie). The prince wanders and finds a village in which he gets trained in martial arts by a *guru* and finally accomplishes his mission to take back the throne. *Wak Perambun* is a story about an old warrior appointed by the king to look for deer in the jungle. Although he did not find one, he brings home one of the princesses who flew down to take a bath in a pond in the jungle. *Putri Siput Gondang* is the story about a queen driven out from the palace due to giving birth to a big conch. In their exile, a little girl comes out from the snail. At the end of the story, they return to the palace and have their positions restored.

<sup>3</sup> I thank Kris Williamson for generously sharing the *Sejarah Peperangan Tok Janggut* with me.

during the reign of Sultan Ismail I, Tengku Temenggung or Long Abdul Ghaffar, was a big fan of mak yong. He sponsored the establishment of an academy of art lasting from 1917 to 1935, which was known as Kampung Temenggung (A.S. Hardy Shafii 2015: 11). The decision that Tengku Temenggung made seems to contradict the purported ban in the 1880s. Moreover, the royal patronage also aided in the spreading of the art form from the Malay Peninsula to the island of Sumatra through connections in the Kedah and Serdang Kingdoms along the east coast of North Sumatra. Sultan Sulaiman of Serdang visited Kedah in 1898 on business and was amused by a mak yong performance. Knowing his counterpart's interest in the art form, Raja Abdul Hamid of Kedah presented the Sultan of Serdang a set of mak yong stage props and performers. Sultan Sulaiman developed the art form at his royal palace in Perbaungan—a small town about fifty kilometres south of Medan, where it was staged for royal family members and people as well. The art form perished after the fall of the sultanate in the social revolution that erupted on the east coast of Sumatra in March 1946 (Ratna et al. 2012: 63–64; Tengku Mira Sinar 2016: 54). Nevertheless, this historical account shows the dissemination of mak yong going through the royal courts.

The mid-nineteenth-century colonial era presented another way that mak yong had spread. Modernisation in the late nineteenth century brought a new technology for steamships that transported people faster. Of many people looking for a better life, groups of artists from Europe and India also moved south to the colonial cities for job opportunities. The influx of itinerant troupes enriched cultural life in the Malay world (Van der Putten 2014: 268–69). This circumstance stimulated the rise of an itinerant group of artists and popular entertainment like bangsawan theatre in Penang (Rahmah Bujang 1975; Van der Putten 2014; Tan 1989). In the case of Penang in the 1870s, mak yong was a popular art form performed for commercial performances and Islamic holidays. It was performed by groups of performers that had become an itinerant company and made a living from this, either on the street or as ordered by local rulers (Swettenham 1878: 163). The trend lasted until the early decades of the twentieth century. A photograph printed in 1903 documented a mak yong troupe performing in Perak (Figures 0.1 and 0.2). Moreover, mak yong troupes reached the colonial city of Singapore. Advertisements in Singapore's newspapers indicated that groups of artists performed Kelantanese mak yong in the city, in which other popular entertainment, such as ronggeng, mendu, menora, bangsawan<sup>4</sup>, and Chinese Street Opera also thrived due to the high demand for such amusements (Lee 2009:16–19).<sup>5</sup> The flourishing of cultural spectacle in Singapore influenced the islands situated across the strait.

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<sup>4</sup> Advertisements were published by the *Straits Times*, *Malay Tribune*, and the *Singapore Free Press & Mercantile Advertiser*, which are available online: <<http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/>>.

<sup>5</sup> The itinerant companies of Chinese street opera performed in a semi-permanent shed, but the resident troupe played in a permanent facility (Lee 2009: 19). In the mid-1890s, semi-permanent constructions of theatres for bangsawan troupes were erected on Victoria Street, North Bridge Road, and Beach Road, while permanent theatre buildings only came into being in the first decade of the twentieth century (Van der Putten 2014: 273).



Singapore and the Riau Islands were connected closely by the genealogy of the Riau-Lingga-Johor-Pahang royal family. Despite political tensions and the split between royal family members that led to the enthronement of the powerless Sultan of Singapore Husain Syah in 1819 (Trocki 1979:39), the familial connection



Figure 0.1: A mak yong troupe in Perak. The male performers wear masks and the females wear a scarf on their shoulders. Behind them, there is a wooden construction called *bangsal*. Published in 1903 by G.R. Lambert & Co., Singapore. Source: KITLV 3675.



Figure 0.2: A mak yong troupe in Penang. The picture shows the same characteristics of the troupe as that in Perak. Published in 1903 by G.R. Lambert & Co., Singapore. Source: KITLV 3676.

was maintained. Both the Johor and Singapore dynasties considered Riau-Lingga as their senior royal house, which they consulted for advice on domestic affairs and performed a pilgrimage to the royal graves in the areas of Bintan Bay and the upstream sections of the Riau Creek (Van der Putten 2001: 197). The royal connection was likely restored by the marriage of Sultan Husain's granddaughter, Raja Maimunah, to the Crown Prince of Riau-Lingga, Mahmud, in 1834. Mahmud became sultan in 1842 but was deposed by the Dutch in 1857 since his frequent visits to Singapore and Terengganu led to diplomatic trouble with the colonial ruler (Matheson 1972: 123, 1986: 10). For people and nobles in the Riau Islands, Singapore was also the city where they could buy daily necessities. Chinese communities that formed the majority of the population on the islands and in Singapore kept their familial ties. Traffic between the islands and Singapore was run by small boats that facilitated the flow of people, goods, and letters (Van der Putten 2001: 44). The arrival of mak yong took place in this context.

One written record on the early presence of mak yong in Riau Islands is *Syair Perkawinan Kapitan Tik Sing*. As is common throughout the nineteenth century, this poem contained information about a real event. This period marked the development of literary traditions using personal authentication of the author moving away from courtly circles (Van der Putten 2001: 22; Van der Putten and Al Azhar 1995: 9) and the change from fiction or tales sourced to "occasional" or "journalistic" syair conveying the real event, such as the eruption of Krakatau in *Syair Lampung Karam* (Van der Putten 2001: 219). *Syair Perkawinan Kapitan Tik Sing*<sup>6</sup> recorded the wedding reception of a Chinese captain's son named Oei Tik Sing, in which mak yong was performed. The author, Abdullah from Penyengat Island, wrote the syair in 1861, which served to record two receptions that took place at Tik Sing's place in Tanjung Pinang and in the Riau-Lingga viceroy's residence on Penyengat Island (Menick 1988: 19–86).<sup>7</sup>

The syair begins with an introduction about Tik Sing's father, the old Chinese captain (*Kapitan Tua*), who is praised for being a wealthy businessman. To depict the profile of the captain, the syair enumerates his properties, family members, and the only son, Tik Sing. His son's marriage with a Chinese lady from Semarang is a pride for the captain. With this wealth and big family, the old captain organises Tik Sing's wedding party with the assistance of his siblings, Baba Hu', Baba Cling, and other relatives. They prepare the place for the arrival of special guests, organise entertainment, and cook food. This celebration, as the syair portrays, is a fancy party with food, drinks, various entertainment forms, and a big crowd, which shows the captain's fame and wealth. With rhymed lines, the syair relates that the old captain

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<sup>6</sup> There are two copies of the manuscript of this syair that are kept in Perpustakaan Nasional Republik Indonesia (PNRI) ML 168, and PNRI W 271.

<sup>7</sup> I am very grateful to Dick van der Meij who kindly allowed me to use his collection of Raymond Menick's edition of the syair. From its content, this syair was most probably written or copied years after the event since it connects the event with Engku Putri, who had already died in 1844.

Orders relatives to set up a stage Cockfighting is in one stage	and the arena stage of mak yong to manage shadow theatre is in the second stage <sup>8</sup>
Gambling's arena was prepared They all had to be equipped	the arena for martial art was erected the crowd was unable to be described. <sup>9</sup>
People are happy night and day The joy is extraordinary	as stage mask-dance and theatre play as they eat and drink alternately <sup>10</sup>

(Menick 1988: 26)

The syair portrays the celebration as very crowded and delightful. People enjoyed food, drink, and a range of entertainment, such as gambling, a shadow puppet play, joget dancing, and mak yong. The guests arrived with their contingent carrying many presents. Malay nobles from the viceregal palace, including Engku Putri Raja Hamidah, Tengku Aminah, and Raja Abdullah, came with about five hundred followers and guardians. Also, the syair recounts that Dutch Resident Walbeehm came with his wife, son, daughters, and other officials (Menick 1988: 35). The old captain received the honoured guests at the venue and served them food and provided entertainment, such as music, dance, and mak yong. The atmosphere was so lively with the crowds and noise from the amusements.

Drama plays night and day Mak yong players sing, dance, and play	the crowd is extraordinary those who see feel anxious <sup>11</sup>
Drums sound continuously Chinese people mix with Malay	the crowd is storming to see it closely from Penyengat and outside the country <sup>12</sup>
Many remarks with commentary All plays and amusements vary	with this all we are happy it was so fun really <sup>13</sup>

(Menick 1988: 31–32)

The above party was likely very impressive and the mak yong performance enchanting. Responses from the audience implied admiration for the performance, in which several terms expressed their emotions, such as feeling *bimbang* (anxious), *suka* or *suka cita* (joyful) and *gemar* (desire). Mak yong was widely known as was implied in the use of it in other syair written in the mid-nineteenth century in the Riau Islands. A Malay tale in *Syair Raja Nur Peri* (written in 1865) mentions mak yong in an event ordered by the king, and a huge crowd came to see

<sup>8</sup> Menyuruhkan orang membuat panggung; serta berbuat bangsal makyung; Suatu tempat orang menyabung; wayang kulitnya dua panggung.

<sup>9</sup> Bangsal judi disediakan; tempat memencak diperbuatkan; Sekaliannya itu disuruh lengkapkan; ramainya tidak terperikan

<sup>10</sup> Bersukaan malam dan siang; Bermain joget topeng dan wayang; Sukanya bukan lagi kepalang; Makan dan minum selang-menyelang.

<sup>11</sup> Siang dan malam bermain wayang; orangnya ramai bukan kepalang; Makyung menari joget menembang; sekalian melihat hatinya bimbang.

<sup>12</sup> Bunyi gedombak bertalu-talu; orang menuntut ramai menderu; Bercampur Cina dan Melayu; ada yang dari Penyengat ada yang dari Hulu.

<sup>13</sup> Ramailah ia berkata-kata; segala ini puaslah kita; Segala permainan ada semata; sangatlah suka di dalam cita.

the performance.<sup>14</sup> Raja Ali Haji mentions mak yong in *Syair Awai* (written in 1868), to explain the meaning of the word “awai”, which is a complement to his Malay monolingual dictionary. The syair conveys a story about someone who almost obtains success but instead falls on bad luck, which is called “awai,” meaning misfortune. In the syair, mak yong is recorded to have been performed at the party during the betrothal of a skipper (*nakhoda*) with a lady, of whom it was later discovered was no longer a virgin (Van der Putten 1997: 120).<sup>15</sup> This survey of literary works asserts the early information and knowledge about mak yong in the account of a real event and fictional stories from the mid-nineteenth century, which suggests its embeddedness in the islands.

Other than Tanjung Pinang, mak yong was performed in the Malay court of the Riau-Lingga Sultanate on Penyengat Island. A reconstruction of mak yong history in the royal house can draw on several sources, such as syair, photography, newspapers, and personal essays. *Syair Perkawinan Kapitan Tik Sing* states that, three days after the reception in Tanjung Pinang, Tik Sing’s father prepared to visit Riau-Lingga’s royal residence on Penyengat Island to see Engku Putri.<sup>16</sup> As the news came to Engku Putri, she summoned the Malay chiefs to prepare a big reception to welcome the captain, the newlywed couple, and their company. She gave instructions for the jetty to be repaired; the venue decorated; food, drinks, and snacks prepared; and entertainment organised.

People are ordered to be congregated	dilapidated jetty is to be fixed
Mak yong stage is to be erected	all the chiefs must be invited <sup>17</sup>
That is what the queen has ordered	in front of the hall mak yong is performed
Sayid Husain is young and accomplished	it was the royal palace he has managed <sup>18</sup>
Her majesty stands to give command	to call people to come on
Bring mak yong set along	set it right and not get mistaken <sup>19</sup>

(Menick 1988: 54, 57, 77)

<sup>14</sup> I thank Mulaika Hijjas who generously provided me her transliterated version of the manuscript of the syair from the collection of Leiden University Library (Klinkert 140). I found mak yong mentioned on page 56 of the manuscript: Dapatlah permainan berbagai perkara (There people find various entertainment forms); yang seperti titah betara (as His Majesty has ordered); joget dan tandak makyong mendora (there are dance, mak yong and manora); banyaknya tidak lagi terkira (and other kinds with an uncountable number).

<sup>15</sup> Di rumah perempuan berhiaslah sudah (The house of the prospective fiancée has been decorated); dengan langit-langit tabir yang indah (with pretty curtain set as ceiling); di serambi rumah dhikr dan burdah (on the veranda dhikr is recited with music); mak yong di tanah riuh dan rendah (down on the ground mak yong is performed hilariously).

<sup>16</sup> Engku Putri or Raja Hamidah, is the daughter of the fourth Viceroy of the Riau-Lingga Raja Haji Fisabilillah (r.1777–1784). She married Sultan Mahmud Syah (r.1861–1812) and received the island of Penyengat as dowry and place for Bugis families.

<sup>17</sup> Sekaliannya orang disuruh kumpulkan; pelantar yang buruk disuruh baikan; Bangsal makyung disuruh buatkan; menyuruh berhadir segala kelengkapan.

<sup>18</sup> Demikianlah perintah permaisuri-suri; di hadapan selasar makyung menari; Sayid Husain muda bestari; dialah memerintah di dalam puri.

<sup>19</sup> Baginda berdiri memberi titah; orang kita baiklah dikerah; Sekalian makyung suruh bawalah; aturkan betul janganlah salah.



Figure 0.3: A photograph of a mak yong troupe at Riau-Lingga's court on Penyengat Island, which was printed on a postcard titled "Rongengs te Penjingat" [Ronggeng in Penyengat]. Yet the title seems to be wrong, as the same characteristics (masks and scarf) are the same as the troupes found in Perak and Penang (Figures 0.1 and 0.2). The third female (from the left side) wears a headdress for the king character that is the same type as what is currently practiced in Mantang Island (Figure 0.4). These characteristics ensure that it is a mak yong group of artists. Source: Haks 2005, Series/No. 31)

The above stanzas indicate the role of royal patronage in the development of mak yong. As the *syair* illustrates, Engku Putri orders for mak yong to be performed at the event organised in the royal house. The role of Sayid Husain reveals how the organiser managed setting up the entertainment in front of the villa. This story about mak yong's presence in court life of Penyengat corresponds with a photograph of a group of performers posing in front of the royal house. It was printed in Amsterdam in the late 1890s in the form of a postcard; it is one of the 500 early postcards of the Dutch Indies that was published by Leo Haks (2005) (Figure 0.3). Also, newspaper articles and personal essays in the 1900s indicate the life in the palace during the tenure of Sultan Abdul Rahman (1885–1910). The sultan was a big fan of performing arts and fostered his own groups at the royal villa. He acted as a patron for a bangsawan performance in Singapore and presented a silver medal to the troupe's leader (*Straits Times* 12, 14 and 28 November 1910).<sup>20</sup> A personal diary of the sultan's secretary, Abdullah or Encik Dolah, reveals critical notes about the sultan's conduct as being very much concerned with wayang, meaning theatrical performances.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> See the newspaper in digital form <<https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Article/>>

<sup>21</sup> See Catatan Encik Dolah. This notebook relates daily activities at Penyengat taking place from 17 October 1902 until 13 April 1904. It was written by Abdullah or Encik Dolah, the grandson of Malay author Haji Ibrahim (Van der Putten 2001: 215). Hasan Junus gave the copy and the transliteration of the diary to Jan van der Putten, to whom I am grateful for allowing me to make a copy.

It is without a doubt that mak yong thrived apart from royal patronage since the dissolution of the sultanate after the last sultan, Abdul Rahman, in 1911. The Dutch expelled the sultan from the Riau-Lingga region, and he lived in exile in Singapore until his death in 1930 (Matheson 1986: 5). His subjects, who remained in Riau-Lingga, had no royal patron anymore. Even though the notion of the Malay kingdom is still alive in the concept of hierarchical being, it does not exist in reality (Wee 1985: v). There is no traditional institution as a patron for the Malays that preserves Malay customs and traditions. This collapse of the Riau-Lingga sultanate marked a breakdown of Malay political and economic power. However, mak yong groups in the first half of the twentieth century still benefited from the wealth of the islands due to its fluid borders and proximity to the Straits Settlements. The Malayan dollar was a valid currency in daily transactions in the islands (Ford and Lyons 2006: 259).

Cultural life flourished as itinerant troupes of mak yong and a form of dance called joget dangkong, for instance, travelled around and made a living from commercial performances. An interview in 2006 with the 1950s mak yong performer Pak Khalid (b.1932–d.2013) in Mantang revealed:

at that time we travelled around...to Tanjung Pinang and elsewhere, reaching Tambelan and Pulau Tujuh (Natuna and Anambas islands)...but now it is not possible to move around the islands because the cost is too expensive...unless, if the government is willing to fund it” (Aton Rustandi 2006: 13).<sup>22</sup>

Pak Khalid’s activities, as recorded above, illustrated that the itinerant troupes of mak yong were still touring around the islands in the 1950s. This prosperous border area even attracted troupes from outside the islands, such as itinerant companies from Medan and Singapore performing bangsawan in Lingga.<sup>23</sup>

Cultural production declined rapidly in tandem with the political turbulence of the early 1960s. Most notable was the political tension from 1963–67, where Indonesia fought against the establishment of Malaysia. President Sukarno’s political rhetoric of “ganyang Malaysia” (crush Malaysia!) worsened the relationship with its neighbour. Indonesia strengthened its border controls so the Riau Islanders could not easily access their neighbouring countries. This political turbulence had both economic and social consequences. The so-called “dedolarisation” took place when the Straits dollar was replaced with a local currency known as Kepulauan Riau Rupiah, which affected socioeconomic ties between the Riau Islands and Singapore (Mackie 1974: 218). Cross-border economic exchange interactions declined significantly (Ford and Lyons 2006: 368), where those living in the Riau Islands could not sell their local commodities

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<sup>22</sup> My translation from the original text: “waktu itu kita keliling...ke Tanjung Pinang kemana aja. Sampai ke Tambelan, Pulau Tujuh sana...tapi sekarang tidak bisa keliling pulau lagi, biayanya terlalu mahal...kecuali dibayar pemerintah.” I thank Dr. Aton Rustandi for sharing with me his report, written for the Ford Foundation based on his visit to Kepri. The report is an evaluation of the “revitalisation” project of mak yong and bangsawan funded by the foundation, carried out by ATL.

<sup>23</sup> Some bangsawan troupes from Singapore were known as Raja Desis and Ge Song (Aton Rustandi 2006: 21) and from Medan as Bangsawan Sinar Medan (Anastasia Wiwik et al 2017: 16).

and buy any goods in Singapore on their return home. Because the impact on the local economy was so severe, commercial entertainment, including mak yong troupes, decreased significantly. From about twelve active groups in the 1960s, there were only three places where mak yong could still be found by the 1970s. These included Tanah Merah in Bintan Bay area, on Pulau Panjang near Batam Island, and Mantang Island located south of Bintan Island (Sastrosuwondho 1985: 18).<sup>24</sup>

Being dissociated from its close relationship with the neighbouring Straits Settlements, the Riau Islands were left isolated, situated only as a peripheral region of Indonesia. The swift political and economic changes implemented in Jakarta changed the islands into a backwater area and affected the lives of the people. This process began in the late 1950s with the decline in the status of the Riau Islands as an autonomous region in 1950. It was at this point that the islands were subsequently merged with the province of Sumatra Tengah (Central Sumatra) and controlled from Bukit Tinggi in West Sumatra. Only six years after proposing the formation of Riau Province (of which Riau Islands was a component), the central government in Jakarta officially inaugurated the province of Riau in March 1958 and appointed Tanjung Pinang as its capital. The establishment of the province coincided with Jakarta's efforts to subjugate the army-led rebellion declared in February 1958 in Padang, West Sumatra. However, ten months later, the central government moved the capital from Tanjung Pinang to Pekanbaru on the mainland of Sumatra (Andaya 1997: 502). Since administration, political power, and development were concentrated on the mainland, the islands were once again relegated to distant backwater status.

Indonesia under Suharto's regime had since 1968 executed development and modernisation projects for most aspects of life in the young nation. The government facilitated large-scale investments in the mining sector and infrastructure, such as industrial estates in Batam and Bintan, and bauxite mines in Kijang. Tourism emerged as one of the strategic sectors for developing the economy. To attract tourists, the local government presented elaborate and sanitised forms of ethnic cultures. This instigated the change of many rituals and practices to become more "proper" and conform to tourists' expectations (Rodgers 1993: 150–52). In this context, new entertainment forms grew in numbers and attracted a wide audience. In Riau, both in mainland Sumatra and the offshore islands, the increasingly bigger audiences of cinema signified a shift in people's interests from traditional to the new entertainment forms.<sup>25</sup> In this context, mak

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<sup>24</sup> Sastrosuwondho collected information from Said Husin Alatas who made the survey in the 1970s, took care of mak yong in Riau Islands (Sastrosuwondho 1985:18), and sponsored the establishment of a training centre in 1976 named Sanggar Seroja together with his son-in-law, Abdul Razak (Pudentia MPSS 2010: 7).

<sup>25</sup> The number of cinemas grew rapidly in mainland Riau, from 12 (1968) to 23 (1975) and climbed to 33 sites by 1980. The number of viewers increased from 449,158 (1968) to 2,151,089 (1980). In the Riau Islands, the increase in the number of cinemas from five (1968) to six sites (1980) attracted a large number of visitors—111,086 (1975) and 65,759 (1980) (BAPPEDA 1975: 245, 1980: 127).



yong theatre had fallen out of favour among younger generations by the 1980s. There were efforts to train a group of teenagers to perform mak yong at a workshop at Tanjung Pinang's Teachers College. However, this single workshop did not continue with other training activities as it was expected to stimulate regeneration of performers, except for one stage performance in the college (Sastrosuwondho 1985: 48).

Traditional practices became endangered in the same era. Yet the national government attempted to save, in this case, traditional arts. Tod Jones argued that cultural policy under Suharto's regime reconfigured the relationship between the state and cultural workers for several reasons. It was to build patronage with the new order regime to overcome the stigma of being engaged or affiliated with Lekra.<sup>26</sup> An interpretation of the Indonesian Constitution defines ethnic cultures as the basis of national culture. Furthermore, traditional art forms fit with the notion of cultural heritage having inherently historical connections (Jones 2005: 194). From these points, the state-run cultural research, documentation, and publication began in the 1970s (Jones 2005: 275). It defined ethnic groups through selected forms and documented heritage and traditional culture and arts.

This cultural policy played a role in maintaining national integration through the creation of national culture, which at the same time constructed regional (provincial) culture. For the sake of national interest, the state's definition domesticates and depoliticises regional and ethnic cultures so as to become picturesque and exotic cultural heritage. It changed customs (*adat*) into a display, a performing ritual. Greg Acciaoli calls such a process as aestheticisation and detraditionalisation, where traditional practices become insignificant in the sociopolitical realm for local people in most Indonesian regions (1985: 152–53). In this context, several projects took place in the Riau Islands to study and record mak yong dramas, as in 1975 (Sastrosuwondho 1985: 1), in 1991 by the Indonesian Institute of Science (LIPI), and in 1993 by an NGO under the name of the Oral Tradition Association (ATL) (Pudentia MPSS 2010: 7, 9). A Smithsonian project took place in 1994 to record Malay music in Sumatra, including mak yong music in the Riau Islands (Yampolsky 1996). Two years later, the Ministry of Education and Culture published a booklet with basic information on mak yong (Benny Lumowah 1996). The government sponsored mak yong performances for documentation purposes in the 1980s and 1990s but sanitised it to become “proper” and fit with the notion of a modern Indonesia (Aton Rustandi 2006: 18).

While freezing traditional culture in a folkloristic style, the Indonesian government expanded its economic interests in Riau (its mainland in Sumatra and offshore islands) in a way that impoverished the local inhabitants. The national government in Jakarta commenced huge projects to create industrial estates in

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Besides Indonesian films, the most popular movies were imported from Hong Kong, the USA, India, Japan, Italy, South Korea, England, Taiwan, and France (BAPPEDA 1975: 252–53).

<sup>26</sup> Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat (Institute for the People's Culture), an organisation founded in 1950 that was affiliated with the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI).



Batam and Bintan, a shipping terminal in Karimun, and a tourism area in the north of Bintan Island (Asparaini Rasyad 1993). Batam Island changed drastically under Jakarta's master plan, which treated the island as if it was empty land. The state claimed to own all land on Batam and established the Batam Indonesia Free Trade Zone Authority (BP Batam) to manage land use, administer investment, and develop infrastructure. Development in Batam surrounded and suppressed local inhabitants residing in the coastal area. In other parts of Riau Islands, several enterprises exploited bauxite in Kijang, tin in Karimun and Singkep, and gas in Natuna. Riau Islands had been drawn into the global economy even though the local inhabitants, who were mostly fishermen, felt that this economic growth had affected the marine resources that they relied on. Meanwhile the migratory Orang Laut, as self-proclaimed custodians of the sea, protested for the right for territory (Chou 1997).

Mainland Riau also experienced economic growth from these initiatives, but it oppressed the local Malays in several different ways. This was seen by academics and Malay activists as an exploitation that harmed the lives of the local people and the environment. American enterprise Caltex exploited a large number of oil deposits. Large forests transformed to become oil palm plantation, labours' residences surrounded it, and the forestry industry (Mubyarto 1997: 542, 554). The Malay inhabitants in the villages and in the interior had lost control of their traditional lands. Proverbs, rhymed verses, or other forms of oral traditions that had legitimated the ownership of the land for a long time was not effective in fighting against the expansion of plantations and oil drilling. The Malay cultural system did not function on its land, as experienced by the "inland" Malay of Suku Petalangan (Tenas Effendy 1997:636; Turner 1997:699). What the Malays received from these drastic changes was the "poisoned" river due to industrial activity and expansive deforestation (Al Azhar and Sita Rohana 2018: 3). The local Malays were in a dilemma since relying on nature for subsistence was less feasible, while working in a formal occupation or industry was also hard due to competition from other newcomers to the region who came voluntarily or through the transmigration program.

Migration forced the local inhabitants of Riau Province to become a minority on their land. The newcomers dominated the marketplace and the harbour, many of them came from Minangkabau (Al Azhar 1997: 768). The government's transmigration program classified vast areas in the outer islands of Indonesia as "unproductive" or "vacant" lands, which, without considering the local customs in regulating land ownership, led to conflicts in land tenure between Javanese transmigrants and local inhabitants (Hoshour 1997: 561). Riau's population growth of 10 to 15 percent since the late 1960s until the 1990s can be explained by the influx of newcomers to the province.<sup>27</sup> As many as 3,625 people from Java migrated to mainland Riau through this migration scheme in the 1970s (BAPPEDA

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<sup>27</sup> The two destinations in Riau of the transmigration program were Indragiri Hulu, of which 459 (1969) and 866 (1970) transmigrants were placed, and Indragiri Hilir with a bigger number—735 in 1972-73, 734 in 1973-74, 615 in 1974-75, and 216 in 1975-76 (BAPPEDA 1975: 207).

1975: 207). Meanwhile, industrialisation attracted voluntary migrants in search of jobs in industrial estates in Batam, Bintan, and other informal sectors in the islands. These migrations drastically changed the demographics of the islands. Overall, Riau Islands' population rose from 352,186 in 1975 to 422,712 in 1980 to 493,542 in 1995 and up to 2,189,653 in 2019 (BAPPEDA 1975: 69, 1980: 43, 1997: 34; BPS 2020b: 73).<sup>28</sup> Based on these demographic figures, local Malays form 21.64 percent of the population on the islands among other major ethnic groups, such as Javanese (27.30 percent), Batak (14.73 percent), Minangkabau (11.50 percent), and Chinese (8.51 percent) (BPS 2012). Aris Ananta (2006) stated that migration has changed ethnic composition in the Riau Islands and may also provoke violent conflict. This is due to social envy from the less-educated minority Malays who claim to be the “owners” of the land but are disadvantaged in the social and economic arenas compared to the comparatively more highly educated migrants.

This complex situation continues the degradation of Malay culture. Prominent cultural activist Tenas Effendy viewed it from a *longue durée* lens, highlighting the fall of Melaka to the Portuguese, followed by the defeats of Johor and Riau-Lingga. The degradation continued after Indonesian independence. Tenas commented on this deterioration with profound emotional expression in a 299-stanza poem entitled *An Epic Poem of the Malays' Fate* or *Syair Nasib Melayu* (Tenas Effendy 2013). This syair begins with the imagery of old Malay kingdoms with their sovereignty, dignity, and prosperity. However, they experienced successive deterioration through the ages, which diminished the greatness of subsequent generations, including the Riau Malays. The poem illustrates the consecutive defeats of the former Malay kingdoms in politics and economics since the arrival of the European powers who divided and subjugated them, leading to their collapse. As Effendy expresses in the poem, the Malays hoped to cure their illness and regain sovereignty after Indonesian independence. However,

Decades after independence	seasons change, eras pass
Yet the Malays remained on the bottom	their fate was not yet one of prosperity
Every day more outsiders arrive	yards are filled, homes overflow
Forests are chopped, bushes are cleared	Malays are pushed aside, losing their lands
Due to the presence of many outsiders	Malay culture becomes shakier
Oppressed by other people's cultures	they let it seep into their bones
Some Malays feel oppressed	in their own home they starve
Every opportunity is seized in	there is no way out <sup>29</sup>
competition	

(Tenas Effendy 2013: 17, 35, 37, 39)

This syair illustrates a difficult situation. The Malays found that the sea and forest that served as the source of their livelihoods had been depleted by

<sup>28</sup> More stark is the growth of population in Batam, which increased rapidly from roughly about 6,000 coastal dwellers in the 1960s to 27,589 in 1975, 58,439 in 1985, 196,080 in 1995, and up to 1,107,551 in 2019 (BAPPEDA 2005: 85; BPS 2020a: 64).

<sup>29</sup> I quote the English version of this poem as translated by Timothy P. Barnard and Rohayati Paseng Barnard and chose four stanzas that, in my opinion, are relevant for this introduction.

industrialisation, and their presence was supplanted by migrants. Also, their traditional way of life did not work anymore as it was difficult to survive under the new situation and resulted in those who refused to adjust being left behind. Thus, the choice for individuals was whether to tolerate the situation or to change it into a more agreeable state. A group of cultural activists initiated attempts of reinventing Malay traditional practices, values, narratives, and history to change the situation and set up a new vision for the future of the province. They promoted local Malay traditional practices to provoke consciousness of being Malay and to establish “Malayness” as an identity marker to self-legitimise and obtain a dominant position as masters of their own land. This formation of identity demanded the revival of Malay traditions and the incorporation of identity with locality, which is the notion of “Riau-ness” (Al Azhar and Sita Rohana 2018: 5). In this context, mak yong’s revival was part of a deliberate and organised effort for more uniquely Malay culture in a process of what can be called revitalisation (Harkin 2004; Wallace 1956: 265).

### **Revitalisation**

Group of activists (consisted of academics and performance artists) initiated an attempt to revive Malay tradition and shape Malay identity. U.U. Hamidy, a Malay scholar in Riau, began his efforts to study, publish, and teach Malay traditions and heritage, especially literary works from the nineteenth century. He accentuated the roles of Riau-Johor Malay as the administrative language of the Dutch East Indies, as a vessel for the nationalist movement, and in its further development as the official and national languages in Malaysia and Indonesia. Hamidy saw that the Malay language had the potential to gain national reputation in Indonesia and promote Riau Province to become the centre of Malay language and culture (Hamidy 1981: 44–57). He believed that this was the way Riau could reinvent part of its identity.<sup>30</sup> Local universities promoted the Malay language and traditional culture through the establishment of a centre for Malay studies at the University of Riau, the Islamic University of Riau, and the Islamic University of Syarif Kasim. Subsequently, in 1982, these universities envisioned two main goals for scholarly activities, one of which was to promote the illustrious Riau Malay language and culture (Al Azhar 1997: 768–70).

Cultural workers holding positions in Riau Cultural Centre (Taman Budaya Riau) promoted Malay traditional arts through an art contest that staged only Malay art forms (Al Azhar 1997: 768–70). The project was later extended to Batam. Cultural workers organised *Kenduri Seni Melayu* (Malay Art Fest) in 1999, which has continued for over two decades as an annual event promoting Malay traditional arts and practices.

Cultural festivals stage various art forms and play important roles in shaping Malayness. Will Derks (1994) investigated the role of poetry reading as a

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<sup>30</sup> Rephrased and translated from: “Itu agaknya juga dapat dipandang, Riau menemukan kembali sebagian dari kepribadiannya” (Hamidy 1981: 12).

form of social criticism and commentary on the situation of contemporary Riau Malays. Most poets and authors did not only recite their works on stage but also published them in local newspapers, such as those that are part of the Riau Pos Group (RPG). The CEO of the RPG and activist Rida K. Liamsi was among those who supported literary production by providing columns for literary works in RPG periodicals, publishing the literary magazine *Sagang*, and presenting the Anugerah Sagang award since 1996 for those who were considered to have dedicated their lives to cultural and literary activities (Agus Sri 2011: 218–23). This encouraged literary production and activism among the poets who promote the Malay language for a proper position as the “mother” of the Indonesian national language. Also, poetry and short stories have functioned as a means to convey critical commentary on the authoritarian regime under Suharto (Derks 1994: 102–7). Literary works in the 1980s raised the theme of the marginalisation of local Malays to criticise “development,” especially poetry readings that functioned as a tool to provoke consciousness of being Malay (Al Azhar and Sita Rohana 2018: 4). This stance characterises the activism in the revival of Malayness, which remains an active tradition among Riau’s circles of poets and artists.

The revival of tradition also materialised in the institutionalisation of Malay customs through the establishment of Lembaga Adat Melayu Riau (LAM-Riau) in 1970. LAM aimed to become a leader for “standardised” Malay customs in the absence of other traditional institutions like the Malay sultanate. Here, custom (*adat*) included traditional values and their manifestations in ritualised practices. LAM actively gave Malay titles to those who were considered to have dedicated their lives to society. LAM’s activities looked like spectacles or aestheticisations of custom, which is different from that of an emerging *adat* concept in early 2000 that was often related to protest and violent conflict (Davidson and Henley 2007: 1). However, in the post-authoritarian regime, LAM Riau initiated the establishment of the pan-Sumatran Malay Institute of Tradition in Pekanbaru in 2006 to coordinate social and cultural movements with other LAM bodies in Sumatra to reclaim Malay traditional lands across the entire island. This coalition continued through meetings in Jambi in 2011 and 2014.<sup>31</sup>

These endeavors aimed to revive traditional culture and to strengthen its significance in the contemporary context. Al Azhar asserted that these efforts did not mean to practice traditions as they were, but to bring them in line with the current situation with a different constructed community and their imagined future. The revival, therefore, changes the traditions to conform to the current context and purposes.<sup>32</sup> These attempts are reflected in a Malay metaphor, “erecting the submerged tree-trunk” (*membangkit batang terendam*), which implies the efforts to restore the abandoned traditions in a new context. The restoration of traditions

<sup>31</sup> Musyawarah Lembaga Adat Melayu Se-Sumatra, held in the governor’s office of Riau, in Pekanbaru, 15–17 April 2006, organised by LAM Riau. For further details, see Musyawarah Lembaga Adat Melayu Se-Sumatra, 2006. Perpustakaan Tengku Luckman Sinar, Medan, North Sumatra, Indonesia.

<sup>32</sup> Interview on Penyengat Island, 6 September 2018.

aimed to reconstruct the Malay cultural realm, ground it to a certain location, and position the Malays as “the masters of their homeland” (*tuan di negeri sendiri*). Taking into account these phenomena as the basis of consideration, I identify this cultural renaissance as a revitalisation movement. Anthony Wallace defined the revitalisation movement as “a deliberate, organised, and conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture” (Wallace 1956: 264–65).<sup>33</sup> A revitalisation movement changes the situation rapidly. If, as Wallace insisted, there is a prompt change taking place in one generation, it is revitalisation.

Michael Harkin assessed the theory of the revitalisation movement and argued that it is still useful as a theoretical lens to view political-religious movements (Harkin 2004: xvi). Wallace studied the revitalisation movement taking place during the colonial era, based on the colonialist account about indigenous resistance against western colonisation. Harkin stated that the phenomena of the revitalisation movement were constructed within the circumstances related to colonialist political control over the colonised people and the development of ethnographic research (Harkin 2004: xvi–xvi). Colonial discourses and the structure of knowledge over the native people have constructed the explanations and the phenomena of, for instance, cargo cult and millenarianism, as part of power control over people with “exotic” beliefs and “irrational” millenarian behaviour. Harkin pointed out that such a phenomenon of cults also occurs in Western society. Wallace suggested that the Western world could be part of the field of inquiry (Harkin 2004: vxii; Wallace 2004: x).

Since this theory has such a wide-ranging scope, it should be applicable not only for colonial contexts but also the postcolonial situation. Wallace raised the model of the relationship between “hegemonic power” and “oppressed Other,” which is suitable for the postmodern academic sphere and the current wave of globalisation provoking the “emergent nativism” as a response since it creates a “neocolonial situation” (Wallace 2004: ix). With such a relation, this model is applicable to observe, for instance, the Islamic revivalist movement (Maududi 2009), which is part of the reaction to hegemonic Western power. Regarding the imbalance in power relations, I view the “Centre and Periphery” relation between the central authority of Indonesia and its regions, which in this study is the Riau Islands. I take into account the emergent nativism that corresponds to the “production of locality” with a certain degree of nativist element, on which I will elaborate in the following part of this chapter.

The theoretical debate that Harkin brought forward raises the issue of the linear model of the social process that Wallace employed to view the revitalisation movement. It lacks a feedback mechanism and any sort of reflexivity, as well as

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<sup>33</sup> Anthony Wallace uses the term „satisfying culture“ to imply a cultural system with new regularities that brings satisfaction to the members of society, which is the opposite of the stressful situation under pressure or colonisation and without a way of achieving prosperity other than to change it through revitalisation. I retain this term to show the psychological terms that he uses, which will be discussed and assessed later.

the ability to look at it from a non-linear perspective and “chaotic theory” (Harkin 2004: xxx–xxxi). To illustrate the process, a worsening situation of a steady state of society develops into individual stress and cultural distortion, bringing it to the stage of revitalisation. This process goes from the mazeway reformulation<sup>34</sup>; communication of a new vision; organisation of a cultural movement; cultural transformation; and routinisation of new regularities before finally achieving the new steady-state status (Wallace 1956: 268–75). In such a linear process, Wallace applied the model of social organism and used the terms “stress”, the oppressed and “equilibrium” to unite the psychological, biological, and social inquiries under “system theory.” However, “it is rather abstract and perhaps fails to attend sufficiently to the unique texture of social and historical circumstances” in a particular society (Wallace 2004: viii). As Wallace and Harkin suggested in their assessment in considering the uniqueness of social events, feedback, reflexivity, and the impact of the revitalisation on society, I take into account particularly the situation in the Riau Islands with its social composition, economic structure, and political and cultural history. In the act of resistance to the national government of Indonesia, for instance, the feedback and impact of Malay cultural revitalisation are necessary to consider. One of these is the formation of the province of Riau Islands. Subsequently, the current revitalisation indicates its manifestation in simultaneous particular processes in four modalities, which I will discuss in the part that follows.

From recent studies and Wallace’s theory, I argue that the revitalisation movement has much to do with the revival of a belief system, traditions, and reorganisation of society where they change the way they see themselves to define the other (colonial power or nation-state). Despite the formulation of this theory dealing mostly with politico-religious movements, it includes identity formation. Even though most recent studies on the revitalisation movement do not refer to Wallace’s model, some that do apply his theory to specific cultural movements indicate some features of the movement, such as identity formation, the invention of tradition, and nativism (Cash 2016; Henry 2004; McMullen 2004). To contextualise the model of the revitalisation movement into this study, I assume that the Malay cultural renaissance is a cultural revitalisation movement promoting language and traditional culture, in which Islam is one of the main pillars in the formation of Malay identity. In this study, however, the Malay identity formation will be seen from the viewpoint of the revival of traditional performing arts as part of the efforts of cultural revitalisation.

The cultural revitalisation manifest in the social process of the reinvention of heritage strengthens the positions of native, indigenous people, or local inhabitants. In the case of Riau, cultural revitalisation insists on a return of Malay

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<sup>34</sup> Anthony Wallace defined “the mazeway” as a mental image that the members of society perceive themselves as part of a cultural system. Wallace, who viewed cultural systems as social organisms, presupposed that “the mazeway” is the image of an organism comprised of people (Wallace 1956: 266).

traditions in a new context. If traditions are usually associated with backwardness, revitalisation turns it around to become a tool to achieve progress. In the late 1990s, Riau Province declared the “Vision 2020” to pursue a reputation as the centre of Malay culture in Southeast Asia. The revitalisation and the enhancement of Malay identity developed to become a political movement demanding independence from the Indonesian state. Tabrani Rab, a university lecturer and medical doctor in Pekanbaru, gathered with students and activists and recited the declaration of independence on 15 March 1999. The Free Riau Movement (*Riau Merdeka*) began, and the activists organised the Riau People’s Congress (*Kongres Rakyat Riau*) on 29–30 January 2000, where the majority of participants voted for independence.<sup>35</sup>

The Free Riau Movement could be seen as the peak of Malay cultural revitalisation, but it was also a turning point from which the cultural movement had changed since the early 2000s. Political decentralisation in Indonesia, which brings regional autonomy and financial balance between the central and regional authorities from the year 2000 onwards, changed the relationship between the centre and the periphery. It also created opportunities for the establishment of new provinces and provided more space for the expression of local culture and identity, which had been suppressed under the Suharto regime. In this changing situation, political elites in the Riau Islands made a move to form a new province separate from mainland Riau. With the worsening relationship between Jakarta and Pekanbaru since the declaration of the Free Riau Movement, the elites in the Riau Islands submitted their proposal to Jakarta for a new province. The reason given for the proposal to form the Riau Islands Province was due to local dissatisfaction about the development that had been concentrated in the mainland. It was claimed that the Riau Islands were a less developed backwater area that had gained very little from the administration in the capital, Pekanbaru. People in the islands argued that the industrialisation and exploitation of natural resources were a kind of “colonisation”. Because of this, the establishment of a new, separate province was necessary to accelerate the economic development and improve the people’s quality of life.<sup>36</sup>

The division of the mainland and the islands was not merely a geographic split or a recent elite-driven political manoeuvre (Tabrani Rab 2002a). Rather, it was rooted in “long history of independent development” (Andaya 1997: 488). Barbara Andaya argued that, in the period after Indonesian independence, there had been the recreation of visions of *daratan* and *kepulauan* (Andaya 1997: 502). In my view, the recent political change after Reformasi in 1998 created opportunities to bring these visions into reality through the formation of separate administrative territories: Riau in the mainland of Sumatra and Riau Islands. Concerning Malay

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<sup>35</sup> For more information about Kongres Rakyat Riau, the Free Riau Movement, and its failure, see Tabrani Rab (2002b) and Colombijn (2003).

<sup>36</sup> For more detailed descriptions about the establishment of Riau Islands Province, see Faucher (2007); Kimura (2013); and Long (2013: 46–54).

cultural revitalisation, the circumstances of the formation of the Riau Islands Province are necessary to take into account.

I consider this political development that led to the split of Riau as a unitary province to theorise the revitalisation movement. As for the loosening of control from the central government, the region had the opportunity to reconfigure regional identity, stimulate a sense of locality, and expand its network with neighbouring countries based on a shared Malay identity. The provincial government of Riau Islands emerged to become an essential agent supporting Malay activists and performers in cultural revitalisation. These circumstances shaped the characteristics of the Malay revitalisation movement that enhanced the production of locality and the transnational network with the Malay World across national borders.

### **Locality and transnationalism**

Since its establishment in 2004, the new province of Riau Islands has attempted to promote Malayness as the local identity and encourage attempts in bonding the local population and in making sense of their status in society. When nationalist narratives were not relentlessly promoted to the people as in the 1970s to 1990s nation-building project, local traditions—such as tales, customs, rituals, practices, and arts—were revitalised to produce “local subjects” to have an emotional attachment with local values and place. Local subject is manifested in the term *putra daerah* (local scion) and has strong implications in the social and political arenas. Groups of local youth founded associations as Malay local scions to support their position as the priority group to benefit from the economic development and positions in local bureaucracy. In this respect, locality does not mean spatial but the structure of feeling shaped by social immediacy, interactivity, and contextuality. This is produced by certain activities that create “local subjects” through naming, ceremonies, ritual(ised) events that inscribe locality onto bodies (Appadurai 1996: 178–82). It is important to note that in Arjun Appadurai’s theory, the production of locality takes place in the diasporic community through mediation. Yet in this study, the locality is produced in the “homeland” since there is a necessity to reaffirm the local culture, subject, and identity due to migration and newcomers that had changed the life of local inhabitants and degraded their position in their homeland.

As the production of locality creates local subjects, it is also materially produced through making and remaking places. Appadurai calls this technique the spatial production of locality (Appadurai 1996: 180). The struggle of residents from thirty-three villages to fight against the expansion of industrial estates on Batam Island denotes the process of spatial production of locality or redefinition of space from the local Malay point of view. The Malay activists in Batam organised their resistance against BP Batam and claimed their heritage land, reclaimed their ownership, and named their neighbourhood as the old Malay village (*Kampung Tua*). This effort of (re)making places for the local subject is, according to Appadurai, the act of locating subject. A newly coined slogan, “*Tanjung Pinang*



*Kampong Kite*” (Tanjung Pinang is our home), indicates how “locality” is spatially produced and “place” is created. Inspired by this slogan, the young musician Adi Lingkepin (Supriyadi Hasanin) composed a song that became popular with school-aged children, who would sing along with it when its recording was played at cultural festivals.<sup>37</sup>

The production of locality characterises the revitalisation movement. The provincial authority chose specific items of official heritage to become icons associated with place, all of which are in the province’s territory with each district in the Riau Islands having something representative of it. Regional and city branding was part of the making of these icons. Tanjung Pinang came up with the branding “*Kota Gurindam Negeri Pantun*,” or “the town of gurindam and the country of pantun” (Van der Putten 2011: 226–29), which additionally encouraged heritage formation in the city. Tanjung Pinang city promoted pantun and the aphoristic poem “Gurindam Duabelas” to be taught at schools and popularised through art contests.<sup>38</sup> The former mayor of Tanjung Pinang, Suryatati Manan (2003–2013), profiled herself as a poet (*walikota yang penyair*) through writing, publishing, and reading her works at cultural events (Abdul Kadir 2009). Local authorities sponsored revitalisation through the distribution of small grants and cultural festivals.

In the production of locality, mak yong theatre form was also revived. The governments of the Riau Islands Province and Bintan District supported the reinvention of mak yong as a “treasure” or *khazanah* of Malay culture. They distributed grants to stimulate art production and elevated mak yong to become the distinctive marker and icon of Riau Islands Malay identity. People on the small island of Mantang created an icon from mak yong representing their place as the village of mak yong. The local administration of Bintan made the art form into the icon of the district. The local icons pantun and “Gurindam Duabelas” for Tanjung Pinang and mak yong for Bintan function as a representation of place or a place identity, which is often interrelated with tourist promotion and, most importantly, with the formation of Malay identity.

Ritual, practices, and performance play an important role in the production of locality and making sense of place through the celebration of heritage sites, objects, and remnants of the former place of the Riau-Lingga Sultanate. Although the sites and objects are necessary, they need cultural festivals, stage performances, and spectacles to express their stories, propagate their existences, and guarantee their survival. Both provincial and district authorities regularly organise cultural festivals, in which sites and objects are interconnected with stage performances. With cultural festivals celebrating heritage sites and intangible heritage, such as

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<sup>37</sup> See the song online: <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFymtc\\_MYX8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFymtc_MYX8)> accessed 10 November 2020.

<sup>38</sup> Pantun is a Malay poetic form with a quatrain structure and a rhyme scheme a-b-a-b. Gurindam Duabelas is an aphoristic poem written in 1844 by prominent author Raja Ali Haji, who was member of the viceregal family of Riau-Johor residing on Penyengat Island.

mak yong, the local authorities, activists, and performers further their ambition to obtain a self-promoted reputation of the Riau Islands as the “motherland of the Malays,” *Bunda Tanah Melayu*. At this point, besides the aspect of producing locality, the ambition implies another aspect of Malayness, which is transnationalism.

Malay transnationalism is different from migrant transnationalism, which bases its premise on the connection of diasporic communities across national borders and/or their connection with the home country (Bauböck and Faist 2010; Tedeschi, Vorobeva, and Jauhiainen 2020; Vertovec 2009). Malay transnationalism is rather based on the concept of the Malay World, *Alam Melayu*, which is the area around the Straits of Malacca. Dispersed communities—such as the Chams in Vietnam and Cambodia; or those who are minority groups in Singapore and the southern provinces of Thailand; various communities in Sumatra and in the Riau Islands; western and northern Borneo; and the southern Philippines—identify themselves as Malay and as being a part of the Malay World. The impetus behind Malay transnationalism is the initiatives from civil society, individuals, and organisations to connect the Malay communities across national borders through transnational activities and a shared Malay identity. Processes like establishing cultural dialogues, conferences, and cultural festivals have taken place in multi localities that intend to build this network, reconstruct the Malay cultural realm, and ground it to place: *Tanah Melayu*.

In these transnational activities, Riau and the Riau Islands have played their roles among other Malay communities and organisations, even though organisations and individuals from Malaysia had been pursuing these efforts from as early as the 1970s. Malaysia played a major role through the state’s support of setting up regional dialogues, Malay World-themed conferences, and cultural events. Ismail Husein was one of the active leaders in the Malay World who led the Federation of National Writer Associations of Malaysia (GAPENA) and set up Malay cultural dialogues, such as Northern Dialogue (*Dialog Utara*) and Southern Dialogue (*Dialog Selatan*).<sup>39</sup> Other initiatives came from the Melaka-based organisation, Malay World Islamic World (Dunia Melayu Dunia Islam/DMDI), which promotes Melaka as a tourist destination and disseminates the recently-standardised values—asccribed to the former kingdom of Melaka—to the Malays in the entire world through cultural dialogue.<sup>40</sup> Other than this, the Malaysian government also organised Malay World Conferences in 1996 and 2001. These

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<sup>39</sup> These cultural events (seminars on culture, literature, and art performance) have been defined from the Malaysian perspective. *Dialog Utara* comprises individuals and organisations from northern Malaysia, southern Thailand, Aceh, and North Sumatra. Individuals and organisations from Johor, Riau, and Singapore gathered in *Dialog Selatan*. These two forums became biannual events and interconnected with economic cooperation schemes like the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT) and the Indonesia-Malaysia-Singapore Growth Triangle (IMS-GT). This information I summarised from documentation about *Dialog Utara* and *Dialog Selatan*. See Dialog Utara IV, Dialog Utara VII, Dialog Utara VIII, Dialog Selatan II, and Zaini-Lazoubert (1992).

<sup>40</sup> These objectives are mentioned in the booklet and program of DMDI’s conferences. See Konvensyen Dunia Melayu Dunia Islam IV, 2003. Konvensyen Dunia Melayu Dunia Islam V, 2004.

transnational activities have built a network in the Malay World, although the initiatives from Malaysia declined in early 2000 after the economic crisis of 1997. The role of the Indonesian provinces in Sumatra increased at this point since political decentralisation gave more opportunities for local influence in economic development. Due to the Riau Islands' location at the border area between Indonesia, Singapore, and Malaysia, it was well-situated to take advantage of regional tourism and gain other benefits from these Malay World transnational networks. As a result, cultural festivals function as both economic tools and cultural events, which aim to increase local revenue and strengthen transnational ties of Malay activists, performers, and communities.

Several festivals have been held, while others have continued to be held into the early 2020s. *Revitalisasi Budaya Melayu* (Revitalising Malay Culture) was a quadrennial event (held in 2004, 2008, 2012) during Mayor Suryatati's time in office (2003-2013). *Festival Tamadun Melayu* (Festival of Malay Civilisation) was held in 2013 in Tanjung Pinang and in 2017 in Daik, Lingga. A bigger festival coordinated by the provincial administration was the *Festival Bahari Kepri* (Festival of Maritime Culture of Riau Islands). Other festivals celebrating historical sites included *Festival Sungai Carang* (Carang River Festival), *Festival Pulau Penyengat* (Penyengat Island Festival), *Festival Gunung Daik* (Mount Daik Festival), and *Festival Gunung Bintan* (Mount Bintan Festival). At a more localised level, there are other festivals organised by district administrations. Even though some of them have been discontinued, other events have appeared with different names or formats (See Chapter 3 and Chapter 4).



Figure 0.4: The performance of a mak yong group from Mantang Island, Sanggar Bungsu Sakti, that performs the story of *Putri Timun Muda* at Festival Teater Bintan held in Kijang town on 26–27 August 2017. See the headdress of the king (standing on the right) and the scarf on the shoulders of female performers sitting on the far right. Compare it with figures 0.1 and 0.2. Photograph by Alan Darmawan.

The above events are usually branded as “international festivals” that stage artwork from the southern provinces of Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, and even Vietnam. Performing arts and festivals in general provide activists, performers, and even the general public an opportunity to socialise and build networks based on shared Malay culture and heritage. At Revitalisasi Budaya Melayu (RBM) in Tanjung Pinang in 2012, mak yong groups from Riau Islands, Kelantan, and Patani performed. From this encounter, they established a working relationship where they would visit each other and further exchange knowledge related to the tradition. Practitioners from the Riau Islands bought musical instruments from craftsmen in Kelantan. Meanwhile, performers from Kuala Lumpur visited the Riau Islands to learn mak yong in Tanjung Pinang. A performer from Patani handed Tanjung Pinang-based performer Elvi Lettriana a Thai manuscript containing mak yong stories to strengthen their relationship. This all builds upon the assumption of shared heritage in the Malay World and cultural affinity among Malay groups across national borders. The social contact between groups is easier due to the increase of mobility and connectivity at the border area.<sup>41</sup>

These two aspects of the Malay revitalisation movement indicate that Riau Islands Province plays an important role in its support to activists and performers who are active in cultural revitalisation activities. It facilitates cultural festivals and other events, while also sponsoring local artists to represent the region at Malay festivals held outside of the Riau Islands. In this respect, the government has its own economic and administrative purposes by supporting the enhancement of Malay culture through tourism festivals, while performers depend, to a certain extent, on the government for patronage. Simply put, the independence of cultural activists and performers remains, even if they also rely on government support. Given that these groups share complimentary interests (i.e., the government aims to develop the economy through tourism and commodified Malay identity, while the activists and performers want popularity and personal economic benefits), I look at the collaborative efforts between artists and activists with the government in the revitalisation of Malay culture and identity. To understand the revitalisation in this context, I theorise that it takes place in four modalities.

### **Revitalisation in four modalities**

The collaborative efforts of bureaucratic institutions and groups of artists in reviving tradition, heritage, and identity formation is the field in which cultural revitalisation takes place as social processes. These processes, for which I will disentangle, constitute cultural revitalisation taking places simultaneously in four modalities. The social processes are heritagisation, traditionalisation, Malayisation, and regularisation.

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<sup>41</sup> It is necessary to note that mobility at the border area of Riau Islands has been encouraged by the local authorities to facilitate and increase tourist visits in the past a few decades. This is run in the framework of border controls, which has been strengthened by the state. Since the early 1960s, the strengthening of border controls has affected the mobility of the islanders crossing the straits, which had been there before the establishment of post colonial states (cf. Ford and Lyons 2006; Wee 2018).

Heritagisation is the process of making objects, practices, and places into heritage, which reflects the interests of many agents to make a tourist attraction, display, exhibition, national identity, local identity, official memory, history, and cultural property (cf. Haldrup and Bærenholdt 2015; Harrison 2013: 69; Walsh 1992: 4). I consider heritagisation as a global tendency that UNESCO has bolstered, and the member states tend to pursue. Following the global trend, the Indonesian state encourages heritagisation at the national level by making an official list of national heritage. This process is in line with the growing awareness of owning heritage at the local level. In the Riau Islands, the local authority supports the reinvention of Malay heritage, making it into official representations of cultural identity and tourist attractions. However, it also has an effect on the cultural workers and performers who, in the case of mak yong, show their active involvement in reinventing it as heritage and in its production as art practices and tradition.

Traditionalisation refers to the attempts of connecting a certain practice with the past in order to provide authority to it, make meaning, and imply a continuity from the past to the present (cf. Bauman 2004: 25-27; Mould 2005:257). In the case of mak yong and the Malay cultural revitalisation movement, the efforts to construct a narrative of continuity involve the local government, activists, and performers. These agents comment on mak yong stage performance and connect it with the past, include it as part of the official narrative of local history at museums, and adjust it to the recent local historical writings. Concerning these discursive practices, I argue that the above-mentioned agents traditionalise mak yong to underlie a certain quality that they want to attach to it, which is authenticity. As the agents intend to reinstate tradition through revitalisation, exegesis and claim of authenticity to a certain practice become significant to legitimise its position as a distinctive identity marker. In this sense, mak yong has been made into iconic heritage and artistic representation of Malay cultural identity.

The process of making iconic, unique, and “authentic” heritage goes beyond the creation of artistic representation. The agents of revitalisation intend to instrumentalise stage performances to reconstruct a cultural realm, make sense of place of the Riau Islands, reclaim it as Malay land in a discursive way, and “re-inscribe” the traditions to the people, especially the younger generation. It is the role of performance that the agents of revitalisation employ to (re)make subject of Malay (including those whose ethnic background are non-Malay) and place, *Tanah Melayu*. This process of the absorption or the turn of people and practices is called “Malayisation” (Al Azhar 1997: 769; Milner 2008: 84; Tan 1989: 252–53). Performance practices, in this respect, function as a tool for cultural change, which provides a display window through which people see the image that reflects consciousness and attention to Malay heritage and traditions. These include mak yong and other art forms that fell out of favour. Stage performances, as an elevated occasion, can magnify the projection of consciousness, direct people’s attention to the traditions, and celebrate Malay identity.

Stage performances take place at cultural festivals that occur as regular or periodic events in the Riau Islands. The stage performances constitute a regularity of cultural events, which bring together performers and audiences in a performance space. In the stage performances, the performers instantiate the stories and what is considered as Malayness in an embodied form as a concrete example of what can be called Malay. In this sense, stage performances at the cultural events bring symbols to life. Mediated by stage performance, *mak yong* contributes to the process of routinisation of Malay symbols and values (characters, gestures, local register, costumes, to name a few). Audience and performers may take them from the event into their daily lives in what is designated as “regularisation” (Moore 1975: 234).

In these four simultaneous processes, the local government, activists, and performers drive cultural revitalisation to shape Malay identity, create subject of Malay, and (re)make place. The cultural revitalisation in the particular context of the Riau Islands, as I theorise, asserts a different nature of Malayness from that of dominant academic discourse. The most essential contribution to Malay studies accentuates the elusiveness and ambiguous nature of Malayness as a concept and identity (Barnard 2004; Milner 2008). Despite its ever-changing and contested character, Malayness is also “an actual social formation, a resilient ethnicity” (Maznah Mohamad and Syed Muhd Khairudin 2011: xiii), while the above cultural revitalisation implies its resistance and formative dimensions. Yet scholars have given very little attention to it, and the resilience of Malayness within a changing world remains scarcely studied. It is this neglected focal point among previous studies on Malayness to which I aim to contribute and bring this study into the academic debate.

Previous studies are much more concerned with Malay history, trace the origin of Malay culture and civilisation (Andaya 2001; Milner 2008), examine its authenticity, and observe its transformations over time (Müller 2014; Reid 2001). It is compelling that in the scholarly understanding about the history, reinvention, and interpretations of Malayness constructed in pre-colonial and colonial periods and in the establishment of the modern nation state is necessary. However, the current sociocultural dynamics of Malay communities and identities in multi localities or their connections with communities across national borders is also a field of inquiry to investigate. In this regard, I pay particular attention to the Riau Islands by considering their significance in Malay history that connects them with historical Johor, Malacca, and the Malay world at large, as well as Indonesian political decentralisation since the year 2000.

Studies on Malayness in the Riau Islands between 2004 and 2019 stressed the impact of the establishment of the new Indonesian province on the reconstruction of identity and cultural production. Nicholas Long observed the promotion of Malayness as the identity of the newly founded province and how people experienced it in everyday life, noting how some felt anxious in being a Malay in the Riau Islands (Long 2013: 5, 25). It is understandable since Long

found that the islanders in the urban area of Tanjung Pinang were worried that the regional government could not bring the so-called underdeveloped province that lacked “quality human resources” to a brighter future. In this regard, the Malayness that local identity politics encouraged the islanders to embrace was associated with backwardness. For the large migrant population in the province, the encouragement of Malayness as an official identity and representation created anxiety since it was expected to change social and political relations. Nevertheless, the local Malays perceived it as a moral duty to regain their land.

Carole Faucher found that in the early development of the new province, the islanders chose the identity of “Masyarakat Kepulauan Riau” (Riau Islands Society) rather than Malayness to build a multicultural society on the islands and thought that Malay traditions could not coexist with a modern way of life (Faucher 2007: 451–52). Moreover, the local Malay language was considered to symbolise backwardness, where teenagers in Tanjung Pinang were reluctant to use it, and only students from small islands and fishing communities tended to use it in daily conversation (Ibid: 455). By 2020 the circumstances in the province had changed, where politicians pushing their brand of identity politics promoted Malayness as the dominant identity. One can find that in the daily life of Tanjung Pinang residents, the local Malay language had become widely spoken. Malay traditional arts started to be practiced by a young demographic irrespective of ethnic background. Regarding identity politics, Margaret Kartomi (2019) pointed out the domination of Malay art forms as the official iconic representation of the Riau Islands cultural identity.

Kartomi’s edited volume focused on the politics of art and Malay identity. She emphasised the agency of the actors (political elites and performers) to revive Malay traditional art forms and select them as distinctive markers of public culture of the Riau Islands. Places were considered to shape the distinctive style of the art forms, which were deployed to express a distinctive Malay identity. Simply put, Kartomi and the contributors of the volume sought to understand Malay performing arts in the Riau Islands in the context of Malay history, the geographic situation of the region, and current political contexts. Yet the contributors ignored the agency of tradition that may shape the sociocultural history of the islanders, characteristics of local identity politics, and help to make sense of place through performance events. In this sense, I have come to understand dialectical relations between the revival of traditional arts and politics of identity, especially in the case of mak yong theatre, on which none of the chapters in Kartomi’s volume focuses. The agency of performers with the creative ability to change and modify a certain traditional art form and the agency of tradition as an authoritative “text” with certain conventions are both necessary to consider in this study.

### **Methodology and the structure of the book**

In this study of Malay cultural revitalisation, the revival of mak yong theatre opens up a terrain in which social processes take place. The local government, activists,

and performers revive the art form, make it into iconic heritage and identity markers, train young performers, and facilitate the staging of performances. In this context, I approach mak yong as it is shaped constantly by the agents through social processes to reconstitute it as “text” or tradition, make it into heritage, and stage it as performance at cultural festivals. This context, therefore, has become my consideration to bring forward a multidisciplinary study of mak yong theatre. Anthropological study examines the process of the constitution of oral text or tradition and its relationship with community. From the perspective of heritage studies, I approach mak yong in the process of heritage making, either mak yong as official heritage or heritage of local community. To analyse mak yong stage performances, I apply philological methods to examine the transcription of performance and present it as an edition with explanatory commentaries.

With these approaches I observed and recorded mak yong and the social processes in which many agents reinvent, revive and perform it. I conducted several field visits to the Riau Islands between 2016 and 2020. I made my first short visit to Tanjung Pinang in March 2016 and the second one in March 2017. Both were three to four days long for a preliminary survey in the region. I came back to the Riau Islands for a longer fieldwork that took place from August 2017 to January 2018. I conducted another field visit from August to September 2018 and the final one for the purposes of this study from February to March 2020.

During this field research, I managed my investigation by conducting observation of the events (art and cultural festivals, rehearsal, routine training, official meetings), and doing interviews with performers and other informants (see list of informants in the appendix). I also visited heritage sites, museums, libraries, and other relevant places. Everyday life in Riau Islands allowed me to chat with people and friends and closely observe the social settings. From the place where I stayed in Tanjung Pinang, I frequently visited mak yong groups of artists in Kijang, Mantang Island, and Tanjung Pinang itself. Specifically, I attended several events of the art performance and/or cultural festivals held in Tanjung Pinang, Kijang, and Daik, Lingga (see the list of events and performance recordings in the appendix). Big festivals could last one to two weeks. Yet the smaller ones were held for only two to three days. For the festivals held during my stay, I attended from the beginning to the end. For some of these festivals, I followed the process from the planning stage and discussed with festival organisers and performers after the events. From these processes, I prepared field notes, photographs, videos, and audio recordings. Additionally, I collected locally published materials.

Field notes record my observations, discussions with friends, and interviews with interlocutors. Photographs, audio, and video recordings documented sites and events. The events were the rehearsal sites of mak yong groups and stage performances at cultural festivals and are considered primary sources. I also use other sources, such as archives, unpublished and published reports, and articles. My analysis departs from phrases or expressions that I found inspiring, where the local activists, performers, and government officials used jargon to promote



cultural production. From these expressions, I started to explain the social and symbolic actions related to them based on the sources on hand. The next step was reconstructing the sociocultural processes that constituted cultural revitalisation. The inferences that I made from the abstraction of such processes produced the main argumentation of this study: cultural revitalisation takes places in four modalities. I discuss this further in the chapters that follow.

Chapter 1 discusses the agency of performers in creating their heritage of mak yong. They call mak yong as an heirloom from the ancestors (*pusaka*). The term reflects an awareness of owning heritage. Even though it occurs at the local level, the awareness has been connected by the global tendency of heritagisation and stimulated by the Indonesian state and regional government. Given this, I focus this chapter on looking at four key individuals and their commitment to reinvent their heritage, reconstitute it, run routine training for young performers, and adjust mak yong to the current context of conservative Muslim politics.

As the circle of performers reproduce mak yong theatre, another process takes place at a different layer in the performance practices. District and provincial governments support the efforts of creating the narrative connecting selected heritage like mak yong with the past. This is the act of traditionalisation that authenticates mak yong by drawing the links of continuity and giving authority to the narrative to evoke a community's sense of what is conceived as "traditional." Chapter 2 focuses on this kind of governmental project to revive traditional practices, although it appears mostly as temporary support depending on the favour of local political elites and the central government's programme as well. Therefore, the groups of artists initiated to promote mak yong is based on village support for performance or attempts to make it commercial.

Cultural festivals are one of the occasions in which mak yong is performed. It is also a means of encouraging Malay identity. Festivals celebrate sites, historical events, and amplify a certain narrative about the Malay heroes and nobles, which appears as a means of making sense of place. Chapter 3 discusses the role of performance, sounds, and visual appearance to (re)shape the image of the Malay-self, a place identity, and a cultural realm. In this intent, the organisers of festivals and performers present mak yong as an epitome of Malayness and persuade people to embrace it as an identity marker. In doing so, the local authorities and performers drive the process of situating a clearly defined Malay identity within iconic art, place, a cultural realm, and people as a means to awaken a Malay consciousness through Malayisation.

Chapter 4 focuses particularly on mak yong performances at cultural festivals as a liminal state of being. It stimulates the sense of occasion, intensifies awareness, and serves as a reflexive moment in which mak yong brings stories to life as a concrete image of Malay culture, society, individuals, manners, local register, and values. This is the manifestation of the story world, the world of words. In the context of changing society and configuration of culture, the stage

performance can mediate and provoke the sense of identity by advocating such a concrete image, which the audience may imitate and bring into daily life. This process is called “regularisation.”

Regularisation of Malay tradition, identity, and values through performance is possible due to symbolic communication between performers and audiences that underlie such a process. Chapter 5 presents a microscopic view and analysis of a mak yong play entitled *Raja Bungsu Sakti* performed in Lingga in November 2017. My philological analysis looks at every single unit of symbols (visual, aural, and kinetic) and how they work in a particular stage performance. Approaching the performance from performance philology, I make explanatory commentary on stage acts and audience responses. Finally, I will conclude my study in the afterword. Here, I emphasise the role of words articulated in speech, jargon, metaphors, and stories in the process of cultural revitalisation. Stage performances bring stories to life, epitomise the embodiment of Malayness, and ground the Malay cultural realm.

## Chapter 1

### An Heirloom from the Ancestors

Songs in the album of *Sedayoung Kepri* are attempts to retrace the artwork of our ancestors and continue them in line with the present time but without losing track that connects it to the earlier works.<sup>1</sup>

The above passage is a brief description of a music album launched in December 2017 by Samudra Ensemble, a local popular-music band in Tanjung Pinang. The sentence serves as a frame in introducing newly arranged music and songs based on traditional Malay music. It reflects the attitude of the younger generations towards reinventing cultural heritage in the current situation and in presenting their works to the public. The band produced eight adaptations of traditional songs that are well-known in the region. One of the songs in the album is composed of mak yong prelude songs entitled “Progressive Mak Yong” and is sung in pop-rock style.<sup>2</sup> This single attracted the attention of the younger generations when the band uploaded it on YouTube before the release of the album. The above passage implies that Samudra Ensemble reaffirms and reinterprets Malay heritage of the Riau Islands and shows the importance of arts from the ancestors in contemporary art production.

Samudra Ensemble named its album *Sedayoung Kepri*. In the album, the band likens *sedayoung* to paddling in “the ocean” of Malay tradition. The band stated that the album is a manifestation of their attempt to explore this ocean of traditional arts in the Riau Islands (Samudra Ensemble 2017). Unlike in Malaysia, however, the term *sedayoung* has a less certain meaning in the region. Malaysia’s tradition of mak yong associates the term with the opening songs of mak yong theatre performance sung by the king (*Sedayung Pak Yong*) and the queen (*Sedayung Mak Yong*) (Abdul Samat 2015:26; Jumilah 2015:34). In the case of Samudra Ensemble, though, the band tweaked the term to produce ambiguous meanings. *Sedayoung* is pronounced /səɖʌjɔŋ/. It comes from *se-dayung*, meaning one paddle. From the context of its use, the term is the short form of *se-mendayung*, meaning to row, which fits the imagery of “the ocean” of Malay arts heritage.

The last syllable, *young*, looks like an English word for youth. The term is connected with the band’s name “Samudra,” meaning the ocean, which is the acronym of *Seniman Muda Serantau* (young artists of the region). The syllable *young* is pronounced /jɔŋ/, which is the same pronunciation as the term <yong>. The band uses the term <yong> to associate its album with mak yong theatre since

<sup>1</sup> Translated from the original text: “Karya dalam ‘Sedayoung Kepri’ merupakan menapak tilas kembali karya leluhur seniman terdahulu serta melanjutkannya sesuai peradaban zaman kekinian tanpa menghilangkan jejak benang merah karya yang terdahulu” (Samudra Ensemble 2017).

<sup>2</sup> See the song <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KoGIs-MKisU>> accessed on 25 November 2020.

it promotes its most popular song, “Progressive Mak Yong.”<sup>3</sup> This ambiguity and exegesis suggests a group of youngsters who reinvent Malay heritage through associations of rowing in the ocean. This effort aims to dramatise the band’s “meagre contributions” in reinventing Malay heritage for the younger generations. Samudra Ensemble persuades the public to be proud of taking small steps towards making the heritage speak as a normalised part of the present.

This chapter focuses on the process of heritage reinvention as represented by the case of Samudra Ensemble, especially through that of the band’s incorporation of mak yong. I look at the involvement of the local agents, one of which is the younger generation of performers in several training centres in the Riau Islands. This effort takes place in the context of Malay identity formation, in which the local government, Malay activists, and performers promote Malay heritage to shape identity markers, commodify iconic heritage as tourist attractions, and nominate them to be recognised as a part of national heritage. The performances of heritage manifest at heritage sites, buildings, and monuments that bear the names of Malay heroes and heroines. The ambition to show heritage reflects also in the use of the local Malay language and “traditional” dress styles; in the production of literary works like comics; and in the reenactment of verbal art, music, dance, and theatre forms. These attempts appear as the process of making objects, practices, and places into heritage, and of attaching certain values to them, which is known as heritagisation (cf. Haldrup and Bærenholdt 2015; Harrison 2013: 69; Walsh 1992: 4; Sjöholm 2016: 26; Wu and Hou 2015: 43).

Some studies have found that heritagisation goes beyond the interest of the tourism economy (cf. Harrison 2013: 69; Walsh 1992: 4). Heritagisation has much to do with contested interests among stakeholders at the same and/or different scale of social or political configuration. The case of the destruction of Buddha statues in Afghanistan’s Bamiyan Valley reveals the tensions between local interest in un-making and the global interest in remaking heritage (Harrison 2010). Heritagisation in China shows that the local stakeholders utilise the governmental policies of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) “to enhance their agency” and “obtain a voice in local identity formation” (Maags 2018: 122). In this sense, even though UNESCO regulates the making of international heritage and the state members promote heritagisation for national interest, the local stakeholders also pursue their interests in such a process. In this chapter, I elaborate how the local stakeholders—such as performers, Malay activists, and the local government in the Riau Islands—take part in heritagisation.

In the context of heritagisation of mak yong in the Riau Islands, contestations and negotiations take place even among groups of artists through the discourse of authenticity. Authenticity refers to the credibility or truthfulness of heritage (Sjöholm 2016: 26). Groups of mak yong performers raise such discourse

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<sup>3</sup> For more details about Malay spelling and its equivalence with International Phonetic Alphabet, see Guidelines of transcription in Chapter 5.

and claims of authenticity to compete with each other for recognition from the public and the local and central governments. Hence the groups of artists seek to be acknowledged as the rightful heir of mak yong tradition, which since 2013 has held the status as part of the national heritage of Indonesia. Even though mak yong is an official heritage, the process of heritagisation takes place constantly at the local level, where groups of artists and parts of society reaffirm and reinterpret it in the current context to make it part of their lives and their identities. How does heritagisation of mak yong take place in the Riau Islands? In what ways do tensions and negotiations appear among groups of artists, particularly concerning the issue of authenticity? To what extent are the younger generations involved in the heritagisation of mak yong? How does heritagisation contribute to the formation of Malay identity? I begin from the local point of view of mak yong as an heirloom and the social practices around it.

### **“Pusaka”: mak yong as an heirloom**

The term *pusaka* in Malay society implies a heritage, family property, an object with magical dimensions, or something that is honoured as being divine.<sup>4</sup> It could be either objects or practices and knowledge preserved in the forms of stories, songs, such as in “Lancang Kuning” (the yellow boat), and mak yong theatre.<sup>5</sup> The present generation perceives Riau Islands Province as the area under the jurisdiction of the former Riau-Lingga Sultanate that inherited Malay culture and heritage from the Johor and Melaka dynasties. In this way, the present generation recreates, reimagines, and applies “ancestors” for their own purposes. These ancestors include Malay nobility, heroes, literati, and those who are considered to have developed the old traditions, collectively known as *leluhur* or *moyang*. The nomination of a Malay sultan and nobles to be recognised as national heroes of Indonesia signifies the attitudes that reconsider the importance of ancestors, which goes hand in hand with the encouragement of local history.<sup>6</sup>

In art production, the idea of an heirloom emerges to accentuate the existence of certain art forms that are rooted in Malay tradition. Some groups of artists pick up the term *warisan* (inheritance) and *pusaka* (heirloom) as the formal name of their organisations and training centres (*sanggar*) to symbolically position themselves as the heirs of the pusaka. Several examples of this naming practice, for instance, are the music group of Sanggar Warisan Pulau Penyengat on the island of Penyengat, the dance and music group of Sanggar Tuah Pusaka in Bintan, and Sanggar Mak Yong Warisan in Kijang town. These names imply an awareness of owning heritage and fear of loss, in which the artists want to guarantee its existence. Much of the heritage, particularly within the traditional performing arts, had almost become extinct and needed to be revived from its state of dormancy.

<sup>4</sup> Compare to definitions by R.J. Wilkinson (1908: 172) and W.W. Skeat (1900: 529).

<sup>5</sup> I thank Clara Brakel-Papenhuyzen for the discussion during the EuroSEAS conference in Berlin, especially on the topic of the “Lancang Kuning” song. The sacred dimension of the song and story mentioned in this chapter refers to her presentation at the conference on 12 September 2019.

<sup>6</sup> The most recent nomination at the time of writing was Sultan Mahmud Ri’ayat Syah of Lingga-Riau-Johor-Pahang, who is also known as Mahmud Syah III (r. 1761–1812) in 2017.

This is also the case with mak yong, which flourished in the late nineteenth century but declined in the mid twentieth century before being revived for the sake of a documentation project in the 1970s (see the mak yong history in the Introduction).

From the perspective of the anthropology of text (Barber 2007), the ups and downs of a certain traditional practice through generations indicate that the practice has its own life. The tradition bearers have regenerated themselves, but the traditions exist through the times, much like mak yong in the Malay world. Such characteristics indicate that the form of practices is detachable from society. This is a privileged existence of the forms of actions, which are called texts (Barber 2007: 3). Texts do not exclusively address the written one, but things connected to a form that is composed of words. Texts are made of words, or tissue of words, and they are also forms of action that are used to do things (Barber 2007: 1, 3). In the case of mak yong, I consider its structure as text. It is mak yong's structure that performers instantiate to actual performance. In a formulaic way, the structure directs the performers to act out in certain sequences (see p. 137). Moreover, Karin Barber emphasises that the central notion of text is weaving or fabricating words, many of which are detachable from the flow of conversation and have a privileged existence (Barber 2007: 21). The ups and downs of mak yong are the cases in which the art form had flourished, fell out of favour, and was revived. In the context of the Riau Islands, the present generation revives and reinterprets mak yong theatre as a valuable heritage from the past. Local practitioners devote their efforts to revive and pass down the art form to the younger generations as a call for "saving the heirloom inherited from the ancestors."<sup>7</sup>

Considering the heirloom of mak yong as a text, I raise questions about the elements and process that constitute it, strengthen its authority, and stimulate the community's respect for it. Barber brings forward an integrated framework that views the constitution of oral text as a combination of freezing and creative improvisation processes (Barber 2007: 68). This theory considers the fixing and performing of text as inseparable, through which people conserve and generate new things simultaneously. Performance is an evanescent and single moment, as creative and interactive processes in embodying and improvising text. Meanwhile, another process constitutes a text through detaching it from the single moment and the flow of conversation, which structures and fixes the text and makes it able to be repeated. Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs (1990: 73) pioneered a perspective looking at the process in which a performance anchored in a certain context could be detached or decontextualised as "the process of rendering discourse extractable, of making a stretch of linguistic production into a unit—a text—that can be lifted out of its interactional setting."

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<sup>7</sup> The content of this phrase always appears in my conversations with mak yong practitioners, such as with Satar, who referred to his father and his father's precursors, Said Parman and Pak Gani, who also referred to their precursors. This line in verbatim was stated by Pak Gani regarding his commitment to pass down mak yong tradition as a means to save the heirloom inherited from the ancestors: *menyelamatkan pusaka dari nenek moyang* (quoted from my conversation with Pak Gani after a stage performance in Mantang Island, 22 September 2018).

Of these two directions of the constitution of text, I will discuss further the entextualisation through daily practices. Both performers and communities re-tell the myth of their origins, stories about the magical dimensions of mak yong, and comments and reviews on accidents and personal experiences in performing and watching the stage performance of mak yong, which subsequently contribute to form the corpus of texts and their exegesis. Additionally, groups of performers circulate mak yong practices in training centres, such as trainings and rehearsals, which render the forms of action—dialogue, slapstick comedy, singing, dancing, playing music—into a fixed form of theatre performance. These practices reconstitute the text.

### **Reconstitution of mak yong**

The constitution of an heirloom has much to do with the very fundamental aspect of its existence: the origin. An origin myth of mak yong found in Mantang Island has been written and published. This written record may elevate the authority of the text and exaggerate it as an old, magical heirloom and raise its profile among the people. However, such a belief faces the contemporary context of the formation of Malayness equated with the element of Islam. Given the magical aspects of mak yong, the local agents such as performers dealt with the conservative forms of Islam. As will be apparent in the following section, the change and/or Islamification of the opening and closing rituals of mak yong happened to the process of reconstitution of the text. Meanwhile, the story of origins has been reproduced and spread widely at the same time.

Local authorities sponsored the writing, publication, and distribution of books about Malay heritage to libraries and museums. Several written sources have recorded some slightly different versions of mak yong's origin myth, which were published initially by Hasan Junus<sup>8</sup> in 1972 and republished locally in a book listing the heritage of Bintan District and in a monograph on mak yong theatre (Aswandi Syahri 2005, 2009). Abdul Malik, a scholar in Tanjung Pinang in the Malay literary field, also published an article on the origin myth of mak yong (*Batam Pos*, 29 December 2009), which has been republished in an anthology of articles on Malay language, literature, and tradition (Abdul Malik 2012: 57). A project conducted by the central government of Indonesia in the 1990s documented and published another version of the myth in 1996 (Benny Lumowah 1996).

Based on Hasan Junus' published work, Aswandi Syahri (2005:40) rewrote the myth of origin, in which mak yong is said to have originated from a tiger dance. As the story goes, a man went into the jungle and then got lost. He found a group of hamlets in the jungle, and the people invited him to stay overnight. The man stayed in a house where the host left at night and instructed the man to stay at home. Being alone while hearing the amazing sounds of gongs and drums, the man

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<sup>8</sup> Hasan Junus (1941–2012) was a renowned author in Riau mainland and islands who published the story in an article titled “Dengan Makyong di Suatu Senja” in the local newspaper *Suara Karya*, 23 July 1972 (Aswandi Syahri 2005: 40).

peeked through the gaps in the wooden walls of the house and saw the villagers had transformed into tigers. They were merrily playing a form of theatrical entertainment. In the morning, the man left the village to return home. Subsequently, he tried to imitate the play of the tigers in his own village, which was referred to as *mak yong* at that time. This story revolves around the tiger (*rimau* or *harimau*), which is known as the animistic symbol in Malay popular belief.<sup>9</sup>

A second version raises the importance of the tiger in what is otherwise a more complex narrative. It was said that a man by the name of Wak Colak traveled around the island of Perca. In this ocean voyage, a great storm hit and sank his ship. He survived by clinging on to a tall tree in the ocean, Pauh Janggi. Then a huge bird (Garuda) came and attempted to perch on the tree. However, because it was too heavy, the tree sank. While the tree was sinking, Wak Colak tied a scarf to each of Garuda's feet. The bird flew off and transported the man. On a field in the jungle, the bird saw a group of buffaloes and tried to prey on one of them. As Garuda flew closer to the ground, Wak Colak jumped off and escaped from it. He ran away, but a tiger captured and brought him to a cave where the tiger community gathered. The tigers forced him to dance and play a drama (*peran*). He danced with a mask made of clay. While repeatedly performing and making masks, he managed to make a hole in the cave as a way out. The man escaped successfully and subsequently developed a dance-drama called *mak yong* (Benny Lumowah 1996: 6–8).

This version applies many more animistic symbols. Pauh Janggi is known in the study on Malay magic as a huge tree growing in the great ocean (Skeat 1900: 6–7), which is the only thing left from a submerged continent (Wilkinson 1908: 160). Besides the tiger, this version also involves the mythical Garuda and points out the origin of the mask in *mak yong* tradition. In my fieldwork on Mantang Island, I listened to a *mak yong* senior performer and instructor, Pak Gani, telling this version with more elaborate details.<sup>10</sup> He related that the man traveled to a great ocean called Pusat Tasek where Pauh Janggi grew. His ship was trapped in a whirlpool (*air melingkung tali*) and sank. The man climbed up the tree by using a few metal spikes he brought with him. In other details, after Garuda transported the man, he escaped from the bird and looked for a sanctuary. Although he found a cave, he was captured by tigers instead. The story ends with the same motif, in which the man escaped through a hole he made in the cave.

Pak Gani's version with detailed motifs illustrates the same model in the Malay myth of the origins of the world (Skeat 1900: 6–7). Applying the myth to build the story of *mak yong* origins could be understood as efforts to connect the text to the remote past (Barber 2007: 71), to make it obscure and function as a trigger for exegesis (Barber 2005: 270–76). In this respect, the distant past of the

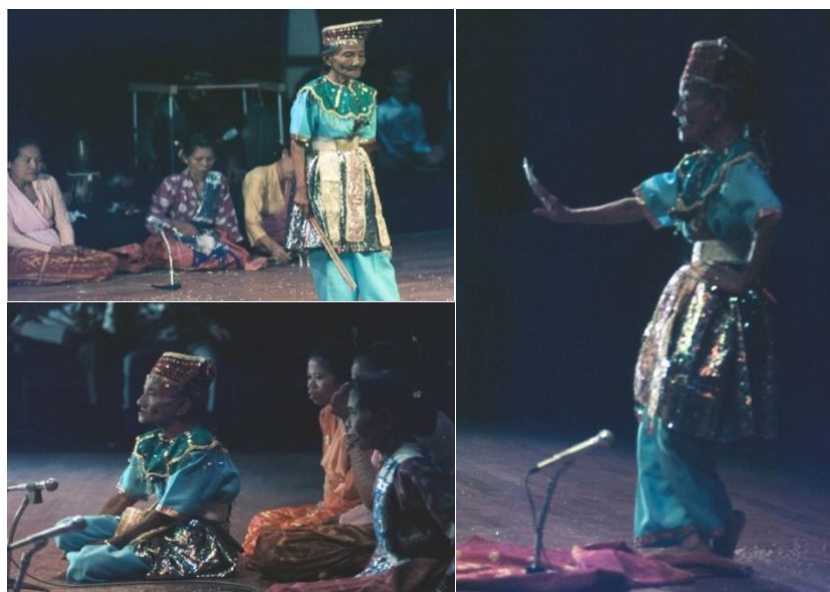
<sup>9</sup> Tiger (*rimau* or *harimau*), as an animistic symbol, occurs in Malay stories (Skeat 1900: 163–70) and, as a comparison, in Indonesian modern novels (Frolova 2017). Robert Wessing studied the tiger as a common symbol in Southeast Asia lying in an ambiguous relationship with man (Wessing 1986).

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Pak Gani, 23 August 2017.



myth functions in creating an old heirloom to legitimate its magical dimensions, which can further strengthen the authority of the text. Writing the myth and publishing it in books and newspapers has spread it widely and also added to its authority. Retelling the story in everyday life has contributed to constituting an authoritative text. These processes are supported by the experiences and beliefs about the magical dimension of mak yong. Unlike the myth of origin, the stories about magic are based on the performers' and audiences' experiences, which are uttered and underlie belief about the magical aspects of mak yong.

Every character in mak yong theatre is believed to be possessed by a spirit. The spirits dictate to the performers during the live performance and assist them to energetically dance, sing, act, and recall the storyline. There is a story connected to this belief about an elderly lady from the island of Mantang named Nek Timah (who was about 70 years old in 1975). She was said to walk with difficulty in her everyday life but could stand and act on stage while performing mak yong. This old performer was a member of the mak yong troupe that attended a festival held at Taman Ismail Marzuki (TIM) Jakarta in 1975. At that time the Indonesian state was constructing regional cultures as part of its initiatives that started in the early 1970s. Mak yong was one of the Malay traditional theatres from the Riau Islands documented through the project. Several photographs below show Nek Timah's gesture in acting the character of the king (Pak Yong or Cik Wang). Pak Gani explained that it was due to the help of spirits assisting her that she was able to perform at her age and in her condition.



Figures 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 (from the left to the right-hand side, top to bottom): Nek Timah's gesture in performance at Taman Ismail Marzuki (TIM) Jakarta, 13 December 1975. Source: Leiden University Library (KITLV 61653, 62647 and 61655).

A more recent story from Elvi Lettriana tells about spirits that guided her as a performer. Elvi learned to perform mak yong in the 1990s at Yayasan Seroja

or Sanggar Seroja.<sup>11</sup> This sanggar was established in August 1976 to become a training centre for mak yong in Tanjung Pinang by Said Husin Alatas, one of the members of the local parliament (Pudenia MPSS 2010: 7). In 1990, the Province of Riau held the Pekan Budaya Melayu cultural festival in the capital city of Pekanbaru. Elvi joined the mak yong group that represented the Riau Islands District. At the event, senior practitioner Tuk Atan acted as the leader and was responsible for protecting the performers, particularly from any supernatural interference. Elvi performed the main character, Pak Yong. As a result, Tuk Atan gave her special treatment. He chanted a mantra and put his thumb to his palate and rubbed it on Elvi's eyebrows. It was believed that he called the spirits to guide her in the performance. Telling this story at home, Elvi admitted that she did not realise she had even performed on stage and only became aware after the performance had ended when her colleagues praised her admirable performance and journalists interviewed her about the show. Reviewing the involvement of the spirits, Elvi regretted that she had not been able to experience the actual event.<sup>12</sup> Yet, in my visits in 2017 and 2018 in Riau Islands, I found that mak yong groups were no longer practicing that ritual, but it did not mean that there was no intervention from spirits.

Another story relates the personal experiences of the young performer Al Mukhlis, who learned mak yong from Elvi and her husband, Said Parman. Mukhlis told me about his experience at the Festival Tamadun Melayu in Daik Lingga in November 2017. After an incredible performance acting as two clown figures (Awang Pengasuh and Inang Pengasuh), he began suffering from a mental illness that almost drove him to suicide and psychotic behaviour. Medical treatments could not cure the illness, and so a local shaman suggested that he return to Daik to recuperate. Parman brought him to Daik and asked some relatives for help. A local shaman in Daik revealed that he conducted inappropriate deeds by protecting himself with the assistance of other spirits. Moreover, according to Parman and Elvi, his outstanding performance was considered to be too confident and arrogant. It was claimed that spirits that live in Daik interfered and caused his illness. Mukhlis himself admitted that he asked for such protection and made an engagement with the spirits for personal security.<sup>13</sup> Further investigation revealed that this case involved Mukhlis' family in Tanjung Pinang and Parman's extended family in Daik.<sup>14</sup> This story also circulated in Daik and Tanjung Pinang, which may have enhanced the belief about the magical dimension working around the heirloom of mak yong.

The magical realm underlying the existence of mak yong seems to boost the authority of the art form. Spirits are even believed to possess mak yong properties, such as musical instruments, hand props, and masks (Figure 1.4). The

<sup>11</sup> Yayasan means foundation. In the Indonesian legal system, yayasan is one of the formal statuses that can be obtained from registration for the establishment of organisation.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Elvi Lettriana in Tanjung Pinang on 10 September 2018.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Al Mukhlis in the Island of Penyengat on 06 September 2018.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Said Parman and Elvi in Tanjung Pinang on 10 September 2018.

masks are believed to be able to drive away a storm (*ribut*). Elderly people in Mantang told stories about experiences in watching mak yong for two or three nights in a row, where the mask of Betala Guru was hung on the centre-top of the square-shed arena stage after the performance to protect the village from the storm due to an interrupted performance (Figure 1.5). They took down the mask the next night and put it away after the event had ended. Like the masks, musical instruments are possessed by spirits too. The same elderly audience in Mantang told me about their experiences in hearing mak yong music, which was appealing and said to contain magical power (*berisi*) that compelled them to approach the stage. In this regard, mak yong requires the role of a shaman (*bomoh*) who can interact with the magical realm and reconcile it with the human realm to protect the performers. A shaman acts also as the leader of performers (*ketua panjak*) and is responsible for the opening (*buka tanah*) and the closing (*tutup tanah*) rituals.

The rituals require an experienced shaman who meets the criteria to conduct them. Based on the tradition in Mantang, the leader has to come from a lineage of shamans. Whoever does not meet the criteria but keeps practicing the rituals will be consequently harmed by the spirits. Several deaths were attributed to those who were said to have violated these rules. In a performance in Mantang in the early 1990s, a mak yong performer from Tanjung Pinang who claimed to have learned about the rituals conducted the *buka tanah* to start the event. However, he got sick a few days afterwards and eventually died. The same thing happened to a troupe leader who opened the performances in Kijang and Sungai Enam in 2008. Another story tells of a man acting as a *bomoh* to start a mak yong performance in the area of Bintan Bay, in which he was considered arrogant during a talk in



Figure 1.4. Ten mak yong character masks. More about the characters is discussed in Chapter 5. From left to right on the top row: the forest man Pembatak with his stick, Peran Agung, the Chinese man Apek Kotak, the magical monkey Beruk Alangkada, the ship crew Mualim Satu, Mualim Dua. On the middle row: the astrologer Tuk Nujum, Wak Perambun, Wak Pakih Jenang. Bottom: Peran Bukit. Photograph by Alan Darmawan, 22 September 2018.

preparing the event. Shortly after the event after he consumed durian, he fell ill and died. Commentaries on this case say that it could be the same cause as Mukhlis' case in showing arrogance.<sup>15</sup> Notedly, the area around the Bay is the former place of an old Malay kingdom that is considered to be sacred and that everyone has to pay respect. The same reputation is also given to Daik and Penyengat Island.<sup>16</sup>

The myth of origin and experiences around mak yong's magical dimension remain strong in the context of its revival. Regarding the myth and experiences, the practitioners and audiences stand in the difficult position of adjusting the tradition to contemporary tastes and interests while revitalising Malay tradition. Efforts in defining Malayness, in this respect, have gone hand in hand with the consciousness of being Muslim. Meanwhile, a small group of puritan Muslims propagates a campaign against practices considered to be animistic. We could make a comparison with the case in Kelantan, in which a ban on the public performances of mak yong lasted for 28 years until being lifted in 2019<sup>17</sup> (A.S. Hardy 2015: 15–16; Yousof 2018: 83). Many efforts over the course of nearly three decades did not succeed to discontinue the ban. Kelantan state eventually capitulated but enforced sharia compliancy for mak yong performances.<sup>18</sup> Some artists in the rural Kelantan state accentuated their faith as Muslims and presented their interpretations about mak yong performance as viewed from the Islamic faith, such as the initial movement (*titik bermula*) with the position of hand and the fingers representing the name of Allah corresponding to the Arabic letters *alif*, *lam* and *ha* (Hardwick 2013:83–85). In the Riau Islands, there has not been a direct attack on mak yong practices or an official ban from the local authority or religious institutions. However, the performers feel anxious about preserving the belief about the magical realm and practices accused of being animistic or whether there will be consequences for leaving it in or in changing the tradition. This anxiety, to a certain extent, has driven the performers to recontextualise mak yong to conform to the current situation.

### Recontextualisation

Attempts to deal with these anxieties resulted in various negotiations to find an appropriate solution. Some groups of artists reduced the complexity of the ritual practices. Others modified or even left out the rituals entirely. This change of ritual, in spite of respecting the art form, indicates how the groups of performers have been trying to negotiate with the authoritative text on the one hand and the pressure from the consciousness of being Muslim on the other hand.

<sup>15</sup> Reviews of accidents in mak yong performances by Pak Atan in Sungai Enam, 04 December 2017. Pak Gani also commented on the accidents some times in our conversations during my visits to his place in Mantang. See the list of my interview with Pak Gani in the Appendices.

<sup>16</sup> Most of the islanders respect the three former sites of Malay kingdoms (around Mount Bintan; around Mount Daik in Lingga; and the Island of Penyengat), which are associated with magical dimensions and seen as being *keramat*.

<sup>17</sup> See <<https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2019/09/524500/ban-mak-yong-kelantan-lifted>> accessed on 18 March 2021.

<sup>18</sup> See <<https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2019/09/25/kelantan-lifts-mak-yong-ban-after-two-decades-but-insists-performances-must/1794202>> last accessed on 25 November 2020.

A group from Mantang Island has continued practicing the rituals but simplified them and reduced the ritualistic materials. According to the ceremonial rules of the opening and closing rituals, the materials consist of two plates of cooked rice (one white and one yellow), a bowl of washed rice (*beras basuh*), a bowl of roasted rice, an egg, incense, and three masks of male and female royal attendants characterised as the clown figure (Awang Pengasuh and Inang Pengasuh) and a god known as Betala Guru. The leader places all materials on a tray and puts them in the middle of the front part of the stage, from where he conducts the ritual. He chants a mantra and prayers and takes a handful of washed rice to be exposed to the incense before spreading it to the four directions: front, left, right, and back. The ritual ends with the burying of the egg at the middle-front pole of the wooden construction of the stage. The leader in Mantang has simplified the opening and closing rituals by including only masks, washed rice, and incense. Then he chants the mantra and spreads the uncooked rice without burying the egg (Figures 1.5 and 1.6).

Pak Gani was conscious of the short performance duration allotted by festival organisers, which is about 30 minutes. He wanted to save time by reducing the sequence of ritual processes and the materials. However, another aspect that he considered was public acceptance of such rituals. In a conversation about mantras, Pak Gani refused to share what he chanted during the rituals but explained that the mantra was a kind of prayer for blessing, referring to Islamic tradition. The mantras of mak yong's rituals that cultural activist B.M. Syamsuddin collected from Mantang Island indicated the belief in spirits of the sea and land, which a shaman addresses in seeking blessings (Syamsuddin 1982: 15). In this sense, Pak Gani's



Figure 1.5. The objects and materials of the opening ritual prepared for the performance in TIM, Jakarta, December 1975. From the left-hand side to the right: the mask of Betala Guru; offerings (yellow and white cooked rice, an egg, uncooked rice and incense); a rattan stick; the mask of Awang (red) and the mask of Inang (white). Source: Leiden University Library, KITLV 61635.



Figure 1.6. The objects and materials of the opening ritual prepared before the performance in Mantang on 22 September 2018. From the left-hand side to right: a rattan stick, artificial nails, uncooked rice, incense, and the masks of Awang Pengasuh and Inang Pengasuh (still in plastic bags—they should be taken out from it for the ritual). Photograph by Alan Darmawan.

response tells of either the change in the rituals or the insertion of one of the aspects of Islam into the rituals. Despite the change, Pak Gani never leaves the rituals out and considers them as important steps to open and close performances. In his view, omitting the rituals is considered to be harmful to performers.

However, a group in Kijang purposefully abandoned the opening and closing rituals. One of the performers, Pak Atan, explained that they felt more secure by not engaging with spirits altogether.<sup>19</sup> An exceptional case is practicing ritual by order, such as when done for the purpose of a making a documentary film recording of performances by the groups from Mantang and Kijang. In this documentary, the leader of the group from Kijang performed the opening ritual facing the camera, which is separated from the stage performance. It is traditionally supposed to be done on the stage before the performance. The leader, Satar, also looked reluctant to practice the ritual compared to Pak Gani from Mantang, who conducted the ritual solemnly.<sup>20</sup> A senior member of this group, Pak Atan, explicated about his attempts to ignore the magical realm. He regarded the realm as an entity that one cannot negate but does not have to engage with it. He stated that the spirits will interfere with those who believe, request for their permission, and ask them to be involved in performance. Pak Atan also recalled some cases and mentioned a few leaders who died due to practicing the opening ritual as aforementioned. He affirmed that “it is better to not be committed to such rituals.” Referring to his experience, he was never harmed by the spirits since he began ignoring them in all performances throughout the past decade with Satar’s group.

Unlike those two groups, Said Parman, who leads a mak yong group in Tanjung Pinang, replaced the old rituals with the Islamic practices of reading prayers before live performances. In a conversation about the change of ritual, he confessed that in the past decade he has come to the realisation of being *habib* and bearing the title “Said” before his name (that he believes as a sign given to people who have a direct lineage originating from the Prophet Mohamed). Therefore, he wanted to practice Islamic teachings and rituals consistently in daily life and show it during special occasions. In the change of the opening ritual of mak yong that he created, Parman recited Surah Yasin (Quran 36: 1–83) over a small bucket of water (*air yasin*) and distributed it to the performers to drink. Such a new or Islamised practice was believed to give protection and comfort. One exception to this was the case of Al Muhklis, who did not drink the water shortly before the performance because he claimed he was already protected by the spirits. Parman explained that Muhklis had prepared himself in his house in Tanjung Pinang with such protection by the spirits that he requested. Therefore, he refused to drink the water.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Interview with Pak Atan in Sungai Enam on 04 December 2017. All his explanations quoted in this paragraph were stated in this interview.

<sup>20</sup> Dinas Pariwisata dan Kebudayaan Pemerintah Kabupaten Bintan. *Dokumentasi Kesenian Mak Yong Cerita Putri Timun Muda dan Raja Johan Syah Nyaya*. Bintan. 2014.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Said Parman in Tanjung Pinang on 10 September 2018.



Islam emerged as a significant element associated with Malayness, through which Islamisation of most daily practices and purification of Islamic practices. Ironically, support from the local government in promoting mak yong with its authentic way of presentation as a Malay identity marker has boosted the prestige of the art form and given more respect to the magical dimension as a source of authority. An example for this is the documentary film made by the Department of Culture and Tourism of Bintan that shows the rituals. In this context, either the change or Islamisation of ritual practices has been conceived as the solution in reviving the tradition. The Islamic belief and practices inserted into mak yong make it acceptable and relevant in the current era. This is the reinterpretation of the Malay heirloom of mak yong as a new heritage formation. In 2013, the Indonesian Committee for Intangible Cultural Heritage proclaimed mak yong as national heritage of Indonesia. Even though the making of Indonesian heritage appeared initially in 1970s to shape national identity, it differed from the current context, which is more complex with global tendencies of heritagisation and bottom-up procedures involving more local actors. In the Riau Islands, the local government makes the art form heritage into an iconic Malay heritage that represents local Malay identity. Senior mak yong performers perceive the status of national heritage as the state's recognition of their heirloom. Apart from the official heritage status, the local practitioners try to reaffirm their ownership by enhancing the theatre production, make it part of their life, and pass it down to the younger performers.

### **Re-production and key individuals**

Several senior performers play an important role in the re-production of mak yong theatre and regeneration of the performers. With skills and personal experience with this art form, the individuals are committed to mak yong production and heritage formation. However, in heritage studies, individual experience and engagement with heritage are poorly investigated. Emma Waterton and Steve Watson (2015: 25) have argued that personal experience should be used as the point of departure for a research agenda. The individual as a sentient being with thinking, emotional feelings, and embodied consciousness should be the central attention of heritage research. In this light, I am looking at the individuals' roles and efforts in mak yong production and regeneration of performers, particularly in the founding groups of performers and formalising their organisations. This reflects the formation of heritage from below, not merely the state-sponsored efforts. In this process, tensions may arise among groups of performers related to the claim of authenticity and direct links to the precursors or teachers. This has led to competition among groups of performers and stimulated a regeneration process. Senior performers pass down their knowledge and skills to the younger performers. Key individuals who have devoted their efforts to mak yong production are Pak Gani, Satar, Said Parman, and Elvi Lettriana.

These four instructors obtained their knowledge, skills, and experience from previous efforts of training young performers specifically for the performances staged for the documentation project of local traditions from the

1970s through the 1990s. After a performance in Jakarta in December 1975 (Figures 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3), a local political elite in Tanjung Pinang, Said Husin Alatas, founded a training centre named Sanggar Seroja in August 1976 (Pudentia MPSS 2010: 7).<sup>22</sup> Sumatri Sastrosuwondho, a lecturer from the Jakarta Arts Education Institute (LPKJ), initiated a workshop in 1980 to train the students of Teachers College of Tanjung Pinang (Sastrosuwondho 1985: 13–39, 43–48). In these projects, senior performers from Mantang and Kijang—Tuk Khalid and Tuk Atan—conducted the training for young performers in the sanggar. Meanwhile, Sastrosuwondho came with his team from LPKJ to train students based on their survey on the art form and documentation in Jakarta. However, these projects appeared because of the interests of the central and provincial governments, not initiatives from the people. The training was actually based on the government's order for documentation and cultural festivals. In this context, regeneration did not work as a continuous process but rather as temporary and project-based activities. For example, there are cultural festivals where mak yong was performed, such as at Festival Budaya Melayu (Malay Culture Festival) in Pekanbaru in 1990, Pekan Budaya Melayu (Malay Culture Week) in Tanjung Pinang in 1992 (Asparaini Rasyad 1994: 219), and Festival Lisan (Festival of Oral Tradition) in 1993 in Jakarta (Pudentia MPSS 2010: 13). This last one was a festival initiated by NGO, the Oral Tradition Association (ATL), which promotes oral tradition in Indonesia through study and documentation.



Figure 1.7 Pak Gani is practicing the opening ritual (Buka Tanah) before the performance at Festival Teater Bintan on 26 August 2017 in Kijang. Photograph by Alan Darmawan.

<sup>22</sup> There is a local term for this kind of group, *sanggar binaan pemerintah*, which implies a patron-client relationship with the local authorities. There was a relationship between the local government and Yayasan Seroja, which was managed by the spokesman of Local Parliament Abdul Razak to serve the government in any need for a cultural festival.



Recalling their experiences in the documentation project, the key figures found that in the past fifteen years, there have been more respect to Malay tradition. In the era of decentralised politics, the regional government promoted Malay traditional practices and arts as regional identity markers. This presented opportunities for mak yong performers to encourage theatre production. Since many senior practitioners have passed away, there are only a few experienced performers left. They are the key individuals who run the trainings for younger performers.

Abdul Gani or Pak Gani was the mak yong “specialist” in Mantang. He had been a notable mak yong performer in Mantang, who led a mak yong group there after his precursor, Tuk Khalid, died in 2013. Pak Gani admitted to learn only the story of *Raja Lak Kenarong* from Tuk Khalid, which was told to him one morning and he played it at night. He argues that the rest of the knowledge and skills he acquired without any planned or structured learning process as the methods of transmission. His father was a musician playing drums in the mak yong group in Mantang and acted as the *Ketua Panjak* too, from whom he claim to have inherited the capability of practicing the opening and closing rituals of performance

Born in 1942, Pak Gani became aware of the crisis of performers. Until his death in August 2019, he had done remarkable work after succeeding Tuk Khalid as troupe leader and had been committed to mak yong production. He first watched mak yong during his childhood in Mantang. He began supporting the performers by playing a pair of small horizontal gongs (*mong-mong*), which marked the rhythm in the musical accompaniment. He gained in skill and moved on to the other instruments, such as the vertical gongs, drum, and finally became one of the actors. Even though the art form had declined significantly and was almost extinct by the early 1960s, Pak Gani was part of the troupe in Mantang and performed for documentary purposes for the government. Unlike his childhood experience of watching mak yong play out over the course of a few nights in the village, performances for the purpose of governmental documentation limited the time duration of the performance. Pak Gani was upset with such restrictions, but he was not the leader of the troupe at that time. Since 2013, Pak Gani took over the group and was committed to train younger performers. He claimed that he taught the children the “authentic” form of mak yong, referring to the tradition in Mantang.

As Pak Gani led the group in Mantang, he formalised and renamed it to Sanggar Bungsu Sakti.<sup>23</sup> The previous name was Sabda Puri, which was given by Tuk Khalid. Naming mak yong groups seems to be a newer phenomenon since it is connected with the intervention of government through documentation projects. A survey report from 1975 mentioned only the names of the people considered as the leaders of groups and their place of residence (Sastrosuwondho 1985: 18–19).<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Akta Pendirian Sanggar Seni Bungsu Sakti No. 6 Tanggal 04 Maret 2013, dicatat oleh Notaris PPAT Sutikno, SH. Kantor Jl. Sei Datuk, Kijang Kota, Bintan Timur Kabupaten Bintan.

<sup>24</sup> The survey was conducted by Said Husin Al Atas, a Malay of Arab descent who was living in Tanjung Pinang and was a part of the local political elite.

Even though, there is a lack of evidence to prove that the names are the leaders of troupes. According to Pak Gani, the performers lived separately on several islands, and some of them joined the others to form a troupe. This indicated that a group of performers was fluid. The formal mak yong group with a specific name first appeared with the establishment of Sanggar Seroja in 1976. Then in 1992, Tuk Atan and his family founded a group in the small town of Kijang and gave it the name Sanggar Mak Yong Warisan. Tuk Atan and his family were from Mantang Island but migrated to the prosperous bauxite mining town of Kijang for jobs and a better life. There they formed a mak yong group, and Tuk Atan declared in a performance in their neighbourhood that his group was distinctly different from the group in Mantang.

Tuk Khalid reacted to the split and the formation of the new group in Kijang and consolidated his group in Mantang. He named it Sabda Puri (Aton Rustandi 2006: 49). Two groups with two names split the ownership of mak yong stage props and musical instruments. Both groups claimed to have played the “original form” of mak yong. Pak Gani made a confession that he was committed to mak yong production in order to protect the tradition first developed in Mantang that he considered as “authentic” and to distinguish it from the one in Kijang, which he accused of violating tradition. This was countered by the leader of Mak Yong Warisan, who claimed to preserve the “authentic” tradition.

Satar (born in 1967), one of the sons of Tuk Atan (1936–2007), eventually took control over Mak Yong Warisan. Tuk Atan acted as music instructor in the training programme carried out by Sanggar Seroja in 1990, but he often quarreled with Tuk Khalid due to a difference in teaching methods.<sup>25</sup> However, the establishment of Sanggar Mak Yong Warisan was not merely due to geographic separation from Mantang and the conflicts with Tuk Khalid. The other reason was the acknowledgment from outsiders, who also pushed for the authentication of the art form. Pudentia, who studied and documented mak yong in the early 1990s, chose Tuk Atan’s group as the object of her study that was sponsored by the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI). She developed a good relationship with Tuk Atan, who considered her as an adopted daughter (*anak angkat*). Through this rapport, Pudentia collected materials from Tuk Atan’s group for her doctoral study. She also helped Philip Yampolsky with advice on where and from whom to record Malay music, as part of his project of Indonesian Music of Sumatra in 1994. Yampolsky also then recorded Tuk Atan’s group.<sup>26</sup> Chairing ATL, Pudentia came back to record mak yong in Batam and Kijang in 2008, in which Satar had already replaced his father’s position.

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<sup>25</sup> Pudentia explains that Tuk Khalid accepted the training methods using written script while Tuk Atan did not (Pudentia MPSS 2010: 16–17). Said Parman and Elvi Lettriana, who were the trainees at the programme, elucidated that Tuk Atan’s music lessons changed all the time and were hard to follow, while Tuk Khalid’s lessons on acting and the storyline were more stable and easier to learn. The two instructors could not get along with each other, and Tuk Atan quit the programme.

<sup>26</sup> The recording was published in 1996 in the form of compact disc accompanied by annotation about the music and songs (see Smithsonian Folkways).

Satar declared his position in this social network and genealogy. He interpreted the name of his group (*warisan* meaning inheritance) to imply authenticity as inherited from Tuk Atan. Tuk Atan, in turn, was the heir of Nek Timah (who died circa 1980), who inherited her position from Mak Ungu.<sup>27</sup> Satar has been committed to mak yong and relies on it to earn a living. Therefore, he tends to control their family's heritage. The way he managed the group could not be accepted by his brother, Muhtar, which resulted in a quarrel and yet another split. Satar moved out of his family's residence and founded his own mak yong group in the village Tokojo, which is located near Kijang. He formalised his newly-founded group in 2013 with the same name, Mak Yong Warisan. It is under this name that he actively submits proposals to the local and central governments for grants.<sup>28</sup> Conversely, Muhtar maintains the family's mak yong stage property but prefers to work as a craftsman of fishing nets.

Satar has been promoting his Mak Yong Warisan. Acknowledgment from the central government came when the Ministry of Education and Culture gave one of members of the group the "Maestro Seni Tradisi" award in 2014. However, the award was given to Tuk Atan's widow from his second marriage, Rohaya, since Satar did not meet the criteria as he was not yet 50 years old.

Since managing his own sanggar, Satar has actively built rapport with the Department of Culture and Tourism of Bintan Regency. He maintains a connection with local elites, from whom he receives information about orders for performances, such as from television producers, researchers, and local authorities. Satar manages the group with his wife from his third marriage. His confidence and activities in networking and lobbying the local elites have made him more famous than Pak Gani. When I interviewed an official at the Department of Tourism of Tanjung Pinang who also happened to be a mak yong performer, my interlocutor recommended Satar to be my key informant. Pak Yatim, the head of the Department of Culture of the Riau Islands Province, whom I met once in November 2017, also mentioned Satar's name as the key practitioner and as a prospective informant.

A third key individual emerged from these circumstances. Said Parman (born in 1960) was in the last year of his study at the Teachers College (SPG) of Tanjung Pinang in 1980 when he began to get involved in mak yong production. At that time, Sastrosuwondho proposed a workshop to regenerate mak yong performers. The workshop was funded by the provincial government of Riau (Sastrosuwondho 1985: 43). Experienced in doing a workshop on lenong in Jakarta, Sastrosuwondho and some colleagues from LPKJ carried out intensive training for about twenty students of SPG, one of whom was Parman. They brought the trainees to visit Mantang Island to interact with the performers as the preliminary step to the training.

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<sup>27</sup> People in Mantang believe that Mak Ungu is among the first generation who developed mak yong in Mantang around the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries.

<sup>28</sup> Akta Pendirian Sanggar Mak Yong Warisan No. 3 Tanggal 04 September 2013, dicatat oleh Notaris Marhanis SH. Kantor: Jl. MT. Haryono No. 20 A Tanjung Pinang.

The workshop continued at the school, where participants learned how to perform the popular story in Riau, “Lancang Kuning” (the yellow boat), which had never been part of mak yong’s repertoire. Sastrosuwondho prepared the script and chose the story based on his survey in 1975, which suggested an innovation to the art form so it would be acceptable for the younger generation. The workshop ended with the stage performance of the play “Lancang Kuning” in school and no programme following the training (Sastrosuwondho 1985: 44). Parman admitted that the workshop inspired him to become more involved art production. He came from a family that initiated art production as commercial entertainment. His father, Said Abdul Jalil, is known as the founder of the first local group of bangsawan theatre in Lingga, in their village of Sungai Pinang. His relatives were also bangsawan performers, one of whom was a renowned star, Syarifah Farida. Therefore, changing the pathway from pedagogy to arts was not a big step. Once graduated from the Teachers College, Parman chose to study dance at the Indonesian Institute of Dance (ASTI) in Yogyakarta.



Figure 1.8 Said Parman (on the left) acting as Awang Pengasuh and Elvi Lettriana (on the right) as Cik Wang performer at Legian Beach Festival in Bali in 2011. Photograph: courtesy of Elvi Lettriana.

After graduating from ASTI in 1986, Parman worked as a civil servant at the Cultural Centre (Taman Budaya) of Riau in Pekanbaru. He had wanted to perform mak yong for years. His opportunity came when an event brought him back to the Riau Islands and Mantang in 1990. The Province of Riau organised Pekan Budaya Melayu in Pekanbaru, in which every district had to participate in the festival by performing several kinds of art forms. Parman was appointed to learn mak yong and joined a group that represented the Riau Islands District. From Pekanbaru, he went to the islands and coordinated with the local artists. Sanggar Seroja facilitated the training process in Kampung Tambak, Tanjung Pinang. Tuk

Atan acted as the instructor of the music ensemble, but he was seen by the trainees as being inconsistent, making too many changes and improvisations, and as being hard to follow. Directing the performers in acting, Tuk Khalid seemed to be more stable with his schema of play, consistency, and ease in following.<sup>29</sup> The two instructors always argued with each other and could not collaborate. However, Parman took lessons from both of them. During this process, he became acquainted with Elvi Lettriana, who played the main character of the king, Cik Wang. Said Parman acted as the clown figure, Awang Pengasuh. Their relationship flowered outside the stage, and they married. Elvi performed mak yong on many occasions with Parman, and she is the fourth key figure who plays a significant role in mak yong production since 2011.

Said Parman and Elvi Lettriana founded Yayasan Konservatori Seni in 2007 with the intention of it becoming a training centre for Malay traditional arts.<sup>30</sup> However, Said Parman was busy leading some governmental departments of Tanjung Pinang successively after he moved from Pekanbaru in 2004. Parman and Elvi started to train school children from 5 to 10 years old and formed a group named Mak Yong Muda Ledang Balai Tuan Habib in 2011.<sup>31</sup> Having regular training for a few months since late 2011, the kids performed initially at the cultural festival Revitalisasi Budaya Melayu (Revitalising Malay Culture) in May 2012. However, comments on Mak Yong Muda by the performers from Kijang and Mantang discouraged the establishment of the group. Satar said that Mak Yong Muda is “fake” mak yong that violates tradition. Critics in Mantang considered the other groups as “foto copies” or imitations of their theatre form.

The various groups of performers claim to have inherited the authentic practices of mak yong. Pak Gani referred to the tradition of mak yong in Mantang to legitimate practices in his group, while Satar traced his genealogy to the tradition from Mantang. Said Parman confessed to have inherited knowledge and skills from his teachers, Tuk Atan and Tuk Khalid, who were both from Mantang. As I observed the three groups performing mak yong on stage, I found that they had many more similarities than differences. They had similar dramatic sequences, music, dance, stories, and dialogues. The only discernible exceptions were a few differences in some parts of the story due to improvisation. However, the claim of being the rightful heirs and in competition with each other for public recognition and popularity have encouraged the production of mak yong and regeneration of performers. Heritagisation of mak yong is not only making an official heritage, but it appears as constant efforts to reaffirm its status through regeneration of performers to keep it productive and prevent its extinction.

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<sup>29</sup> Conversation with Said Parman and Elvi Lettriana in Tanjung Pinang, 25 September 2018

<sup>30</sup> Akta Notaris No. 8 dated 06 June 2007, noted and registered by notaries Muslim SH, office on Jalan Tugu Pahlawan No 4C Tanjungpinang, the Riau Islands province.

<sup>31</sup> Mak Yong Muda (the young generation of mak yong) is a group of younger performers of mak yong. Ledang Balai (hall of audience) is the name of the king's palace in the mak yong drama. Tuan Habib denotes the name of the owner, Said Parman, bearing the title *said* and as being called *habib*.

### Regeneration of performers

Training centres play a key role in the regeneration of mak yong performers. Pak Gani led the group in Mantang, Sanggar Bungsu Sakti (hereafter SBS). Satar leads the group in Kijang named Sanggar Mak Yong Warisan (SMW). Said Parman leads Yayasan Konservatori Seni (YKS) in Tanjung Pinang, whose group of performers is known as Mak Yong Muda Ledang Balai Tuan Habib. Most young artists passionately participate in the training centres. As will be discussed further in Chapter 2, the identity politics driven by the local governments in the Riau Islands have initiated the making of artistic icons of the region. In this case mak yong has been selected as one of the iconic representations of Malay culture of the Riau Islands and makes it the pride of the region. The promotion by the local authorities, however, has provoked the younger generation to pay attention to the art form.

Al Mukhlis (born in 1994)<sup>32</sup> is one of the young performers committed to mak yong production. He has been part of the circle of young poets (*penyair muda*) in Tanjung Pinang and accomplished many achievements in the literary field, such as the publication of a collection of poems and championing some contests of verbal arts (*pantun* and poetry reading). However, he felt that his achievement is still incomplete without the ability to perform mak yong. He joined the theatre production and asked Said Parman to accept him as an apprentice. He came to Parman with a piece of hand-woven cloth (*kain songket*) to show his sincerity and present as a symbolic exchange between his application and Parman's acceptance. With this exchange, Mukhlis and Parman concluded their "contract," a relationship between the master and the apprentice. This contract indicated the commitment of youngsters to regeneration.



Figure 1.9 A group of teenagers (senior-high-school students) from Sanggar Bungsu Sakti in Mantang Island (July 2017). Photograph: courtesy of Zarianda Pratama.



Figure 1.10 A group of teenagers from Sanggar Bungsu Sakti after the performance, 22 September 2018 in Mantang. Photograph: courtesy of Nanda Darius.

<sup>32</sup> See Al Mukhlis's profile online <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Enpgw4BjxA>> accessed 22 February 2021.





Figure 1.11 Young female artists of Sanggar Mak Yong Warisan performing in Kijang for METRO TV's television production, 19 October 2017. Photograph by Alan Darmawan.



Figure 1.12 Middle-aged and older musicians of Sanggar Mak Yong Warisan performing for METRO TV. Photograph by Alan Darmawan.

Most young performers are school-aged children. With support from their parents, they join mak yong groups and the training programme as a routine activity. Pak Gani renewed the middle-aged performers of SBS by recruiting school kids. In 2016, these young artists formed two troupes of SBS. About 20 primary school children between 8 and 12 years old formed one group (Figure 1.14), while there were 18 senior-high-school students between 15 and 18 years old that constituted another troupe (Figures 1.10 and 1.11). In Kijang, SMW also trains teenagers and involves them in live performances and collaborates with middle-aged performers, who are mostly musicians (Figures 1.12 and 1.13).

My own experience in Mantang Island revealed the enthusiasm of trainees that I witnessed. On Friday afternoon in mid-September 2017, I walked through the village of Mantang Lama with Pak Dormat, the music instructor of mak yong, in the direction to his friend's house, Pak Ali. When we passed a school, several pupils came to us and asked Pak Dormat if there would be a rehearsal in the late afternoon. He could not make any decision without asking Pak Gani. The pupils headed home. Then we visited Pak Ali for a while before turning to Pak Gani's house. There a group of about 20 school children had been waiting for training. Although Pak Gani postponed it, they were still waiting around. I took a photograph of them, and Pak Gani confirmed once again about the postponement (Figure 1.14).

In Tanjung Pinang, I found such a passion for practicing mak yong at the YKS training centre. Parman and Elvi introduced the theatre tradition to pupils at primary school level and even kindergarten-aged children who came from various ethnic backgrounds: Malay, Javanese, Chinese, and Minangkabau. In their routine training activities once a week, most of the children came back home from YKS by walking while singing and dancing to repeat their lessons for fun. These street performances attracted the attention of local residents, who then gradually came to know about this mak yong training centre. YKS attracted more trainees to join since its first performance in May 2012 and from performances in the YKS neighbourhood in Kampung Kuantan occasionally. In 2018 when I visited Parman

and Elvi, they stated that there were about thirty active trainees who were ready for a performance at any time.

The training programme has become a routine activity in SBS and YKS, though SMW organises a rehearsal mostly in preparation for a performance. The other two centres run their programmes with or without any upcoming staging event and intensify rehearsals a few weeks before the event. In SBS, training activities take place during the time when Pak Gani is back home from fishing, in which he stays for three to four days. However, in the monsoon season, he does not go fishing and can concentrate on giving instruction to young performers at any time in the week. Attempts to make regular training activities have been made with a schedule of training, but it did not always succeed (Figures 1.15; 1.16 and 1.17). The trainees came to SBS at Pak Gani's house for training mostly on the weekend when they are off from school. Regarding the schedule of activities at YKS, Parman and Elvi organised training for children once a week on Sundays. All the activities are centered at their place, either using the backyard or in the living room. All of the property belongs to the training centre, and some of it is provided by Parman and Elvi themselves. The rest, including musical instruments and costumes, are purchased using funds from a government grant.

The training activity is the process of passing down knowledge and skills to perform mak yong to the younger generation. However, since the art form was not active for several decades and not performed publicly except for documentation projects, regeneration did not work through socialisation that occurred during performances, such as Pak Gani watching and supporting the stage performances in the 1950s as a child. In mak yong's revival, the learning process started from the very beginning as young artists had no previous knowledge. The training centres endeavoured to introduce the trainees to mak yong's full repertoire so they could get an idea of the storyline and their roles in the play. In these attempts, the centres used several media to train the young artists.

To establish guidelines for trainees of YKS, Elvi wrote play scripts based on her notes on the lessons given by Tuk Atan and Tuk Khalid in the 1990s. The trainees used these texts to act out, sing, dance, and deliver their spoken lines. Children from kindergarten who are not able to read relied on a family member who would read the script to them at home. Some even recorded mak yong's songs as sung by Elvi to listen to at home. Using play scripts is also the method applied by Satar to train young performers in SMW in Kijang. Satar and his wife prepared the scripts that they wrote based on video recordings filmed during documentation projects. Satar also used tutorial videos to teach the musicians. He shared DVD tutorials of *rebab*-playing with a Sungai Enam Village musician named Ramli.<sup>33</sup> Another example is in the project of training junior-high-school students in Mantang. Satar played a video recording at the first meeting to show a mak yong

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<sup>33</sup> Conversation with Ramli in Sungai Enam, 04 December 2017. See Ramli playing rebab in this video (00:01-00:17): <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b3YXh6eTSNo>> accessed 19 March 2021.



performance to the students. After watching the video, the trainees began to sing, dance, and act out based on the play script Satar prepared. The script seemed to be useful to train those who knew very little or nothing about mak yong. Most cases proved that the young performers stopped relying on the script once they got the schema of the play in their minds. However, Pak Gani criticised this method and maintained his way of telling stories and demonstrating how to sing, dance, and act.

Pak Gani applied the oral method in training at SBS, even though the school kids had to learn from a very basic level and had no previous knowledge. He gave explanations, instructions, and examples of singing with a specific melody, dancing, dialogues, playing musical instruments, and acting. A few examples are Awang Pengasuh's gestures, which have to mimic the movement of an elderly man as well as the local Malay dialect with the ending /ə/ sound in most of the spoken words (for more explanation about this, see pp. 130, 149). The royal family characters move smoothly and speak with the words ending with /ʌ/ sound. When the trainees are practicing the play, Pak Gani corrects them and gives a short explanation of technical things, such as different gestures and dialects or speaking styles for each character. Pak Gani persisted in training his students without the use of scripts at SBS to distinguish it from the other training centres.

Despite different methods of trainings, the three training centres seemed to be successful in passing down the traditions to the younger generation and expand their reach from the centres to schools. SMW with Satar and Pak Wahab as instructors trained junior-high-school students of SMP 23 on Mantang Island. This was part of the project of Artists in Schools Movement (GSMS) in 2017 funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture. In the implementation in the Riau Islands, there were 70 schools (10 in Batam, 30 in Tanjung Pinang, and 30 elsewhere in Bintan) that joined the programme. The local artists trained students in several art genres, most of them rooted in Malay traditions, including mak yong. In SMP 23 of Mantang, headmaster Sudiono set up mak yong as an extracurricular subject. During the training session, I visited the school and had a conversation with the headmaster. Sudiono told me that he had for a long-time dreamed of having a mak yong group in the school. With a heavy Javanese accent, he stated that since the art form "has been acknowledged as world heritage,"<sup>34</sup> he is proud of taking part in saving it from extinction by the regeneration of performers.

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<sup>34</sup> What he refers to as the status as world heritage is either the inscription of mak yong from Kelantan, Malaysia, as one of the Masterpieces of the Oral Intangible Heritage of Humanities in 2008, or the nomination of mak yong manuscripts from the Riau Islands to the UNESCO Committee of the Memory of the World in 2011. The former is the acknowledgment given to Malaysia. The latter was an unsuccessful nomination (see Chapter 2 for more discussion about the MOW nomination).



Figure 1.13 A group of young performers (school children in Mantang) trained at Sanggar Bungsu Sakti. Photograph by Alan Darmawan, September 2017.



Figure 1.14 Schedule of training in Sanggar Bungsu Sakti. Photograph by Alan Darmawan 25 March 2017.



Figure 1.15 A regular training at Sanggar Bungsu Sakti in July 2017 inside Pak Gani's house. Pak Dormat (first from the right) assisted Pak Gani (fourth from the left). Photograph: courtesy of Zarianda Pratama.



Figure 1.16 the rehearsal at Sanggar Bungsu Sakti on the front yard of Pak Gani's house, two days before Festival Teater Bintang (23 August 2017). Photograph by Alan Darmawan.



Figure 1.17 The trainees at SMP 23 Mantang left the play scripts lying on the floor while listening to headmaster Sudiono. Photograph by Alan Darmawan, 21 October 2017.



Figure 1.18 Pak Wahab is instructing the female trainees to sing while Satar and the male trainees play the music. Photograph by Alan Darmawan, 21 October 2017.

Another school that carried out mak yong training through GSMS was SMA 1 of Mantang. Pak Gani acted as the instructor in this school. The students who joined the programme were mostly the trainees of SBS, who had learned from Pak Gani at the training centre. They also had watched some mak yong performances and performed themselves at some events. Pak Gani's task was much easier than Satar's, since it was not for training new performers, but just bringing mak yong into the schools. In December 2017 in Kijang, the groups from SMA 1 Mantang and SMP 23 Mantang performed at the festival of GSMS in Kijang. After the event, Satar seemed to be unsatisfied with the performance of his trainees. He commented on their performance and emphasised that his task was harder since he was training his students from a very basic level. In the next term of the project in 2018, Pak Gani was appointed to train the students of SMP 4 Bintan located near Kijang.

The expansion of mak yong production to formal institutions has also been initiated in some other schools in Bintan District, such as vocational school SMK 1 of Bintan and SMK 2 of Bintan. Sabirin, a teacher at SMK 1, established a mak yong group at the school. Satar blamed these efforts and argued that only he had the authority to teach the "authentic" style of mak yong. Sabirin did not step down, and instead, asked Satar to teach the students. In SMK 2 of Bintan, a group of students learned to perform mak yong from a renowned dancer from Tanjung Pinang, Inez Vinanda. The dancer learned mak yong from Said Parman and joined him with other performers from Kijang and Mantang in a group representing the Riau Islands Province at the festival of SEAMEO SPAFA in Bangkok in September 2011. In SMK 2, Inez trained the students, who went on to participate in the National Contest of Arts for Students (FLS2N) in Yogyakarta (2012) and Medan (2013).<sup>35</sup> In these event, the mak yong group of SMK 2 won the contest in Yogyakarta.

As the regeneration process shows above, what impact does it have on the the younger generations? What can heritagisation tell us about the impact in daily life? Everyday life, not special occasions of stage performance or exhibition, is also the extended stage in which people become active agents of heritagisation. They display experiences of consuming heritage by representation, such as objects, images, or souvenirs from heritage sites (Haldrup and Bærenholdt 2015). In the case of mak yong, audiences and performers imitate the play in daily life. In mid-September 2017, I visited Pak Dormat in Mantang and had a conversation at his home. There I found two mak yong masks made of cardboard with two rubber bands on its sides so as to be fixed on one's ears. Pak Dormat told me that they were the masks of Awang Pengasuh and the astrologer Tuk Nujum made by his grandson, who is a pupil at primary school and a member of SBS. His four-year-old granddaughter joined us and sang a mak yong prelude song while dancing. Pak

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<sup>35</sup> See the performance of the group from SMK 2 on YouTube: FLS2N Seni Teater 2013 di Medan dari SMK N 2 Prov. Kepulauan Riau, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aZRebgXfU5s&t=132s>> accessed on 16 January 2021.



Dormat asked her to wear the cardboard mask before putting on the real mask of Inang Pengasuh. In September 2018, I visited Pak Gani and experienced another case. His three-year-old granddaughter also sang the prelude song. Pak Gani encouraged me to pay attention to it. I immediately turned on my camera, but she was reluctant to keep singing while being videoed by a stranger.



Figures 1.19: Pak Dormat's granddaughter wears the mask of Inang Pengasuh (left) and Awang Pengasuh (middle, made of cardboard). Tuk Nujum's mask is on the bottom-right (compared to Figure 1.4). Photograph by Alan Darmawan, September 2017.

Pak Gani's children inherited mak yong from him. Two stepdaughters he got from second marriage, nineteen-year-old Zakiyah and sixteen-year-old Fitria, learned to perform the characters of the king or the prince. Their half-brother, thirteen-year-old Jupri, acted as Awang Pengasuh. In two events in Kijang and Mantang in December 2017 and September 2018, I heard a member of the audience commenting upon Jupri's performance: "It is totally like his father." It is not surprising since everyday life is also the moment where Pak Gani brings mak yong into conversations with his children. Having stayed overnight sometimes in their house in 2017 and 2018, I witnessed mak yong style of dialogue used in daily life. Pak Gani admitted that it is part of their habit with his wife and children. An example: Pak Gani asked his son who had just come home, "Awang, where have you been Awang? (*Awang dari mana, Awang?*). Even though the term "Awang" is to address any young man, they used the mak yong style of dialogue. The same manners appear in the communication of Pak Gani's children with relatives.

In Said Parman's family, I noticed mak yong-style dialogue when casually talking with them. In 2018 during my conversation with Parman, he interrupted and asked his wife for coffee. Elvi, who had already served us food and drink, replied, "that is the coffee Awang, where are your eyes, Awang!" (*itu dia Awang, kemana matamu Awang!*). I asked them about their speech styles. They explained that such a style had been their fashion in private and was intended to habituate mak yong

practices in their family. Their youngest child, Syarifah Nazla al Qudsi (A'ad), learned mak yong from a very young age and had joined her parents in several live performances. She learned to play the character of the king. Her sister, Syarifah Lail al Qadhariani (U'ul), assisted Elvi to train the school-kid performers but had left Tanjung Pinang for her master's degree in theatre at the Indonesian Institute of Arts, Yogyakarta. The oldest child, Said Fakhrrur ar-Rozi (I'id), an ethnomusicologist who graduated from the same institute, succeeded his father managing the mak yong groups of YKS.

The above habituation and events that I encountered indicate how heritagisation takes place in daily life, which involves the younger generation of performers. The habituation is related to the regularisation of Malay symbols and values to become part of daily life, which from the perspective of occasional event of cultural festivals will be elaborated further in Chapter 4. Meanwhile, as I have shown above, heritagisation is seen as the acts of making mak yong heritage for the younger generation through daily practices of groups of performers. Then, to what extent these phenomena are linked to heritagisation at national level or even global tendency? I would argue that global and national heritage regimes have encouraged the process of heritagisation. Indonesia, as the state member of UNESCO, actively nominates some items of its national heritage, while inviting the participation of the local governments and communities in the making of national heritage. An example of this is mak yong, which is interrelated with the dynamics of the theatre production in the local context of Riau Islands. In the case of mak yong, heritagisation is related to the issues of authenticity, pride, and popularity in the context of Malay identity formation. Groups of artists reconstitute and recontextualise mak yong tradition and regenerate performers. The younger generations have taken part in current mak yong production. Heritagisation takes place in training, rehearsals, stage performances, and daily practices, in which both performers and audience members want to prevent its loss and reaffirm their ownership over mak yong.



Figure 1.20 Said Parman and his daughter A'ad in a rehearsal before the performance in Legian, Bali, September 2011. Photograph: courtesy of Elvi Lettriana.



## Chapter 2

### Erecting the submerged tree trunk

This town had for hundreds of years been known as one of the centres of the Malay kingdoms, and hence, as the centre of Malay civilisation. We want to revive these roles in this era with its undoubtedly big opportunities, because besides its status as an autonomous municipality, [Tanjung Pinang] is also the capital of Riau Islands Province.<sup>1</sup>

The above passage is part of a speech by the former mayor of Tanjung Pinang town, Suryatati A. Manan, given at the opening session of the cultural festival Revitalisasi Budaya Melayu (Revitalising Malay Culture) in 2012. The speech forges a narrative that connects the town to the past dating back to the era of Johor and Riau-Lingga Sultanates from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries.<sup>2</sup> The narrative presupposes a continuity that positions the town as the heir of Malay civilisation. Local authority promotes the narrative to become a dominant discourse hitherto in the Riau Islands to justify some cultural elements from the past as the continuing tradition from the era of the former Malay kingdoms.

The local government and cultural activists have encouraged the reinvention of heritage from the past, such as physical remnants, sites, objects, and practices, and compiled the narrative of continuity to connect them with the present. The government has sponsored efforts to reinstate practices (rituals and performing arts) considered as “traditional.” This act of connecting certain cultural elements with the past and reinstating them currently is what in Malay is quite often referred metaphorically as “erecting the submerged tree-trunk” (*membangkit batang terendam*), which the local authority has deployed extensively to name the above attempts. The term *membangkit* implies attempts to erect the trunk, which is likened to resurrecting or reviving something forgotten or abandoned for a period of time.

The term *batang* (trunk) is widely used in the Austronesian-speaking world as a botanical idiom interrelated with the notions of “origin,” “cause,” “source,” “base,” and “ancestor” (Fox 1995: 223, 1996a: 6). The proto-Malayo-Polynesian term *puqun* means “tree, trunk, base, source” (Fox 1996a: 6), from which the word *pun* in Iban society derived as a fundamental leadership terminology that represents

<sup>1</sup> Translated from the original text: “Kota ini sejak beratus tahun lampau dikenal sebagai salah satu pusat Kerajaan Melayu, yang sekaligus pusat tamadun Melayu. Peran itupun hendak ditampakkan kembali pada era kini, yang peluangnya tentulah besar, karena di samping kedudukannya sebagai sebuah kota otonom, juga menjadi ibukota Provinsi Kepulauan Riau” (Abdul Malik 2010: ix).

<sup>2</sup> The former centre that Suryatati referred to is located on the upstream Carang Creek, which is about 13 kilometres from the centre of present day Tanjung Pinang. I will discuss about the former harbour-city of Riau and the move of the royal abode of Riau-Johor from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries in the next part in this chapter.

“the person who initiates or originates an action” or leader, elder, founder (Sather 1996: 83–84). Atoni Meto people from Indonesia’s West Timor use the metaphor “trunk” (*uf*) to represent the name of the group (*kanaf*) referring to the original ancestor who founded their settlement (Fox 1996b: 143). In the corpus of Malay oral and literary tradition, the usage of the metaphoric term “trunk” (*batang*) could be associated with the vital function represented by the word “pillars” (*tiang*) that support a building like a wooden house.<sup>3</sup>

The term *batang* or “trunk” in the expression of “erecting the submerged tree-trunk” implies the notions of origin, base, ancestor, and founder. These ideas invigorate certain cultural elements or heritage from the ancestors and expand their timespan by employing the narrative of continuity. “To erect” the “trunk” or to reinstate the “traditional” culture from the ancestors is to recontextualise it in the recent social and cultural configuration. Recontextualisation, as Chapter 1 shows in the case of *mak yong*, means that some surviving elements of the cultural forms must be part of a continuous tradition, but some of them are newly invented. In this chapter, instead of looking at *mak yong* theatre as a given “tradition,” I am focusing on the attempts of linking it with the past by employing the narrative of continuity to make it “traditional”. This effort is called traditionalisation.

Traditionalisation refers to what the American linguistic-anthropologist Dell Hymes launched as a concept that addresses a process in which a person or group “makes some effort to traditionalise aspects of its experience” (Hymes 1975: 353). Hymes pointed out this process in which parents tell children about their childhood or more experienced people introduce to newcomers an office or discipline, which one can find in every field of life. Hymes suggested that the tasks of anthropological investigation are to discover the forms of expressions and the attempts in which people keep a sense of traditionalised identity alive (Hymes 1975: 354). Based on Hymes’ concept, Tom Mould distinguished the explicit efforts of traditionalisation from the implicit factors that reinforce a tradition. He defined traditionalisation

as a process that evokes the traditional past not merely as part of a general dialogue with the past, but as part of an attempt to provide authority for one’s own narrative performance and interpretation by supporting or contributing to a community’s sense of what is “traditional” (Mould 2005: 257).

Mould’s definition shows the explicit effort as the process of linking some aspects of culture to the past through narrative and the implicit factor of giving authority to it. Suryatati’s speech above illustrates a construct connecting the Riau Islands to the past, while implicitly giving authority to the cultural aspects regarded as “traditional” to be reinstated in the present. Richard Bauman argued that such a process is part of that of assigning a narrative with “situated meaning,” which

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<sup>3</sup> An example of the use of the term *tiang* is in a Malay aphorism *Gurindam Duabelas* written by Raja Ali Haji in 1847. In the second section (*pasal yang kedua*), the second couplet says: *Barangsiapa meninggalkan sembahyang, seperti rumah tiada bertiang* (anyone who neglects his prayers is like a house without pillars). As a comparison, see Javanese words *saka guru*, which means the four main pillars (Robson and Wibisono 2002).



shows the quality of tradition as “immediate here,” not the inherent objective quality of the past, but the “active construction” connecting the present with a “meaningful past” (Bauman 2004: 27). According to Bauman, this is the act of authentication. Giving an example of contextualising a story, Bauman pointed out traditionalisation in practices before telling a story, in which northern Icelandic storyteller Jón Norðmann contextualises it and is engaged in the act of symbolic construction that draws the links of continuity with the past discourse (Bauman 2004: 25–27).

With the shift of attention from “tradition” to the process of traditionalisation, I am concerned with *mak yong* as a text (Chapter 1) and its contextualisation. It is inherent in the process of traditionalisation that such a process includes (re)contextualisation of the text. In this sense, contextualisation is possible as the text has been decontextualised from its original context to be (re)contextualised in different social configuration (Bauman and Briggs 1990: 68–69, 73). The acts of making a story that connects Tanjung Pinang or Riau Islands with Johor and Melaka are “here and now,” as a construct that connects the present social and cultural entity with the “meaningful” past. I have discussed the decontextualised text of *mak yong* that has been recontextualised in the contemporary era, which shows the process of turning objects into heritage or “heritagisation” departing from the fear of loss and extinction, individual experience and initiatives (Chapter 1). Here in Chapter 2, however, I pay attention to traditionalisation departing from the story of a “glorious” past and efforts to revive it in the present, as a dominant discourse that the local authority has promoted.

As an elite-driven process, I am looking at traditionalisation as government-sponsored projects in the Riau Islands that deploy a single simplified-coherent narrative of continuity of the Malay political regimes to traditionalise the reinvented heritages (material cultures, practices, and knowledge). Looking particularly at *mak yong*, I focus this chapter on the traditionalisation and the main agents that actively play their roles in social practices, such as local government, groups of artists, NGOs, the central government, media, and other international agents, namely those who are experts, academics, and theatre producers.

Some previous studies provide insights on traditionalisation that take place in Europe and Asia. Copp  lie Cocq investigated such a process in encouraging certain cultural aspects of the indigenous Finno-Urgic ethnic S  mi in Nordic countries using the label “tradition” for institutionalisation through the legislative process and tourism promotion (Cocq 2014). Ehsan Estiri studied the act of traditionalisation of the Fire Festival, which involves justification and a subjective frame in constructing historical continuity from the pre-Islamic Zoroastrian period to present-day Iran (Estiri 2018). These processes are related to the formation of identity. They can either obtain support from the state, be critical of it, or both. Recognition from the state led to the creation of national-level S  mi parliaments in several Nordic countries (Cocq 2014: 80), while the shift from Zoroastrian to the Islamic regime in Iran led to the mockery of the pre-Islamic beliefs. Yet the

counternarrative to the Islamic Republic of Iran reimagined the Fire Festival as a profound aspect of Iranianness (Estiri 2018:111). In Central Asia, political elites invoked traditionalisation in two modalities: “tradition” is a juxtaposition to modernity and is positioned as “backward”; “tradition” is the opposite to “modern” and something that has to be demolished. Traditionalisation also led to the practices of meaning-making that endow multiple meanings to “tradition,” in which the elites promote it as an identity marker of a political reconstruction of nationhood (Beyer and Finke 2019: 310).

Concerning the formation of Malay identity and mak yong theatre in the Riau Islands, I am focusing on traditionalisation as part of cultural revitalisation. I raise some questions about the roles of agents or institutions involved in such social and cultural processes, and the way in which they assign meanings to mak yong. How does traditionalisation impact the art form and its stage performance? How does traditionalisation of mak yong contribute to the formation of Malay identity? This chapter looks at the roles of the central and local authorities, Malay royal family members, cultural activists, and performers, all of whom drive traditionalisation collaboratively or in competition and negotiation with each other. I will pay attention particularly to the roles of speeches, writings, stage performances, museum displays, the processes of institutionalisation, and authentication of mak yong as well as their implications.

### **Narrative of continuity and the local government’s efforts**

Traditionalisation practices in Riau Islands employ a narrative of continuity linking the province to the past. The agents such as local government and activists promote the reinvention of cultural heritage and adjust them to the story of the “glorious” past. I reconstruct the narratives found in museums, writings, speeches, and stage performances, which connect the present-day Riau Islands with the eras of Malay political regimes dating back as far as the thirteenth century during the Srivijaya period. The common thread of the story is the moves of the centre of political power commencing from that of Srivijaya to Bentan, Temasek (now Singapore), Melaka, Johor, and Riau-Lingga, whose former territory has now become part of the Indonesian province of Riau Islands. The local authority employs this storyline to justify the formation of Malay cultural heritages like mak yong theatre practice and promotes it to be embraced as such.

The above story seems to be a simplification of complex historical events. It merely equates political regime with cultural tradition. The story draws a line that links discontinued rules. An example is the deposition of the last Riau-Lingga Sultan Abdul Rahman in 1911 by the Dutch, which marked the collapse of Malay rule.<sup>4</sup> The incorporation of the former territory under the jurisdiction of Riau-Lingga into the Dutch colony and then into the Indonesian state designated the

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<sup>4</sup> For further discussion about the history of Johor-Riau and Riau Lingga, see Raja Haji Ahmad and Raja Ali Haji (1982); Andaya (1975); Van der Putten and Al Azhar (1995); Trocki (1979), and the deposition of the last Sultan of Riau-Lingga, see Matheson (1986).

discontinuity of Malay rule in the area. Some cultural traditions like mak yong continued in the Riau Islands into the early-to-mid twentieth century (see Introduction). People in Lingga and Mantang Islands still practice the royal tradition of henna dance (*tari inai*), which is performed before a bride at the henna-staining night in preparation for the following day's wedding rituals. However, the ups and downs of the traditions are not necessarily analogous with the continuation or discontinuation of a political regime.

The narrative of continuity, however, conjoins several aspects, such as geographic territory (Riau Islands), the political regime ruling in the region (Bentan, Johor-Riau, Riau-Lingga, Riau Islands province), and people with their traditions. In my view, the narrative simply narrates that the Riau Islands are the continuation of the former kingdoms implying territory, Malay political regime, and people and their traditions. Nevertheless, in my inquiry, I look at the agents' attempts to promote such a narrative, their effects on cultural production, and entanglement with the identity formation in the Riau Islands. How do these processes traditionalise and reinstate mak yong theatre tradition? I pay particular attention to the narratives constructed on the ideas of "Bintan," "Riau," and "Lingga," which the local authority, activists, performers, and the descendants of royal families of the former Malay kingdoms have promoted.

The narratives of "Bintan" rely on the Malay kingdom of Bentan, which is believed to have been located around Gunung Bintan (Mount Bintan) situated in the Bintan Bay. O.W. Wolters argued that Bentan was one of the islands in the Riau archipelago under the control of the Maharaja of Srivijaya's vassal (1970: 9), to which the king from Palembang escaped as he revolted against the Javanese overlord (Ibid: 78).<sup>5</sup> *Sejarah Melayu* records that the Malay King Sang Sapurba and his followers, who came from Bukit Siguntang located on the northern area of present-day Palembang city, visited Bentan. The chief of Bentan—Permaisuri Iskandar Syah—gave a royal welcome to Sang Sapurba. She also married her daughter Wan Seri Beni to Sang Sapurba's son, Sang Nila Utama. Sang Nila Utama took over the throne and developed the kingdom, which was later inherited by the dynasties that settled in Temasek and then Melaka.<sup>6</sup> In the current context, a group of people who had identified themselves as the descendants of the royal family of the Bentan Kingdom popularised this story for prestige. Meanwhile, the district government of Bintan, to a certain extent, encouraged the narratives for its own interests in the creation of the official heritage, gazetting a landmark (Mount Bintan), and promoting iconic traditional arts for cultural representation and tourist attractions.

The above group of descendants of the Bentan royal family gave a mandate to Tanjung Pinang businessman Huzrin Hood to bear the title of "sultan" and

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<sup>5</sup> Another explanation for the escape to Bentan is the Pamalayu expedition to Sumatra in 1275 launched by Singasari's ruler. See Andaya (2001: 323, 2008: 59).

<sup>6</sup> This story refers to *Sejarah Melayu* edited by W.G. Shellabear (1995) that I selected in consideration for the closeness of its storyline to that of being popular in the Riau Islands.

revive the former kingdom. The newly appointed king gave an Islamic title to the revived kingdom, Kesultanan Bintan Darul Masyhur, the “Sultanate of Bintan the Abode of Repute”, and set a goal to uphold Islamic sharia law, especially in economic exchange. The sultan has promoted the sultanate based on the reinvented story of Sang Sapurba as the “mother of Malay kingdoms” (*ibunda kesultanan Melayu*) that “gave birth” to the following Malay dynasties in Temasek, Melaka, Johor, and Riau-Lingga. Personally, Sultan Huzrin Hood has used his kingship as a vehicle to create a network with sultans from other Malay kingdoms on the Malay Peninsula and those from the Indonesian archipelago. He distributed a book titled *Sesat di Ujung Jalan, Balek ke Pangkal Jalan*<sup>7</sup> within his network to popularise Bintan Darul Masyhur as the “start of the road” (*pangkal jalan*) of the Malay civilisation (Anon 2015). The book contains stories of Sang Sapurba’s voyage up to the eras of the Melaka, Johor, and Riau-Lingga kingdoms, which gives importance to turning back contemporarily to *pangkal jalan* as the revival of Bentan has implied and the application of Islamic sharia law under the guidance of the sultan (Anon 2015: 19–34, 35–52). The term *pangkal* (base, origin, ancestor) is related to the tree metaphor, which is the lower part of a tree-trunk. In this respect, the idea of *pangkal* augments Bentan’s position in the genealogy of kingdoms following *Sejarah Melayu* and Huzrin Hood as a successor of the previous kings with his call for practicing an Islamic way of life.<sup>8</sup>

Apart from the encouragement of Bintan Darul Masyhur, the local authority of Bintan District promulgated the idea of “Bintan.” Former District Head Ansar Ahmad (2005–2015) showed his concern about the effort of making Malayness into the identity of the district. Bintan District’s administration institutionalised Malay heritage by making official lists, restoring tombs and sites, remains, and objects to acknowledge them as official heritage in the district. In this attempt, the Department of Tourism and Culture (Dinas Pariwisata dan Kebudayaan) implemented the project of documenting, recording, and listing heritage. The department sponsored local historian Aswandi Syahri to study, document, and publish books on the heritage of Bintan (Aswandi Syahri 2005, 2009, 2016). These books provided space to the local leaders to further their agenda in the project of heritage-making, in which they made use of the narrative of continuity. In one of the volumes (2009), Ansar stated:

“Bintan” is not a new name in the historical trajectories of the region that is now called the Riau Islands Province. The name “Bintan” has been known since the era of the kingdom of Srivijaya. “Bintan” is one of the “places of origin” of Malay civilisation since the time of Wan Sri Beni and Sri Tri Buana up to Melaka, Johor-Riau, and Lingga. In this historical period, Malay civilisation shows its

<sup>7</sup> “If You Lose Your Way, Start Afresh”

<sup>8</sup> Huzrin’s emphasis on Islam covers up the fact that Bentan Kingdom (promoted as *pangkal jalan*) was pre-Islamic. Therefore, it shows a new element linked to the Islamic revival and the promotion of dinar-dirham or gold and silver coins in the network of the Murabitun movement. For further discussion on the coins and Murabitun network, see (Visser 2016).

magnificent achievements in culture and arts, some of which have survived until the present day.<sup>9</sup>

Ansar accentuated Bintan's position as the "place of origin" which gives the present generations the Malay traditions and heritage. These traditions and heritage (folk stories, art practices, and sites) serve as evidence of the narrative of continuity. Bintan District uses its heritages to endorse itself as the heir of the original place of Malay civilisation. This assertion is undoubtedly contestable from the standpoint of Palembang and Jambi according to the Malay chronicle *Sejarah Melayu* and archaeological findings in the regions.<sup>10</sup> However, what is notable in this study are the attempts to support such a claim. Manifestations of the effort to disseminate the idea of "Bintan" referring to the original place of Malay civilisation is obvious in the museum exhibitions, heritage sites, and cultural festivals, which display Bintan heritage to impress the visitors, tourists, and local people about the rich variety of cultural heritage, material culture, and traditions linked to the past.

Museum Bahari (Museum of Maritime Culture), located on the east coast of Bintan Island, displays its collections in the forms of miniature boats, ships, coastal settlements, and fishing equipment. The museum exhibition also shows a diorama representing the lives of the people in the coastal area of Bintan to give weight to the message and the impression of "traditional" way of life. Museum Bahari exhibits these collections as the material aspect of a civilisation and also includes displays on the sea nomads (Orang Suku Laut) to show the opposite of an ideal of civilisation. Photographs, paintings, and dioramas of sea nomads illustrate "backwardness" as represented by the displays of simple practices of fishing, cooking, parenting, and weddings, which are put in contrast to the change from seafaring tribes to those settling on the mainland of Bintan. The change from nomadic tribes to "civilised" communities that the pictures and dioramas illustrate implies the notion of preserving the image of some Orang Laut groups' past and represents their current state of being people on the mainland residing mainly in Berakit in northern Bintan Island.<sup>11</sup>

Heritage sites located around Gunung Bintan in the village Kampong Bukit Batu have become the local government's priority. They planned to preserve the graves attributed to legendary Malay heroes and heroines. There are dissenting views identifying the individuals within the graves (Aswandi Syahri 2009: 9–11; Wee 1985: 376–77). However, the local people identify them as Dang Pok, Dang

<sup>9</sup> Translated from the original text: Bintan bukanlah nama baru dalam perjalanan sejarah Kawasan yang kini bernama Provinsi Kepulauan Riau. Nama Bintan telah dikenal sejak zaman kedatuan Srivijaya. Bintan juga adalah salah satu "tanah asal" tamadun Melayu sejak zaman Wan Sri Beni dan Sri Tri Buana hingga Melaka, Johor-Riau dan Lingga. Sebuah untaian perjalanan sejarah yang sudah barang tentu telah menghasilkan tamadun dan pencapaian sejarah dan seni budaya yang gemilang pula, dan beberapa diantaranya masih dapat kita lihat pula masa kini (Aswandi Syahri 2009: ii).

<sup>10</sup> See some other articles for academic debate on the search for the Malay origin and archaeological studies on the epigraphs found in the south Sumatra (Andaya 2001; Casparis 1980).

<sup>11</sup> For more discussion on the sea nomads, see Chou (1997, 2003, 2010; Lenhart (1997).

Menini, Dang Serene, Megat Sri Rama, Dang Seri Bani, and Tok Telani. One other cemetery located in Bintan Bay is known as Bentan Penao, which includes three long graves (*makam panjang* or *makam penao*).<sup>12</sup> The district administration improved the burial grounds with shelters and beautified the gravestones for the benefit of pilgrims from other parts of Indonesia and the Malay World who visited the sites. The explanations regarding these graves connect the heroes and heroines found in chronicles. Dang Pok and Dang Menini refer to Wan Empuk and Wan Malini mentioned in *Sejarah Melayu*.<sup>13</sup> Another grave attributed to Johor Admiral Megat Seri Rama is located in Johor, Malaysia, could be an indication of different versions of the story. Despite the contestation, what is obvious in the traditionalisation of these graves is that it connects them with narratives of continuity to strengthen the position of Bentan as the precursor of the dynasties of Temasek, Melaka, Johor, and Riau-Lingga.

Malay activists and artists initiated a cultural festival around Gunung Bintan to celebrate the site as the ancestral land in the region. Senior journalist, poet, and activist Rida K. Liamsi promoted Festival Sastra Internasional Gunung Bintan (Mount Bintan International Literary Festival) in 2018; it was also supported by the governments of Bintan District and Riau Islands Province. At the festival, poets from across the Malay World recited their poems to retell, reinterpret, and comment upon the Malay legendary hero Hang Tuah (in 2018 and 2019).<sup>14</sup> They want the spirit of Hang Tuah to be alive and the present generation to internalise it as a source of inspiration and as a role model of the ideal Malay. The ultimate goal of the festival is to promote Bentan as the original place of Hang



Figure 2. 1. A banner of mak yong set as a display in the office of the Department of Tourism and Culture, Bintan District. Photograph by Alan Darmawan.

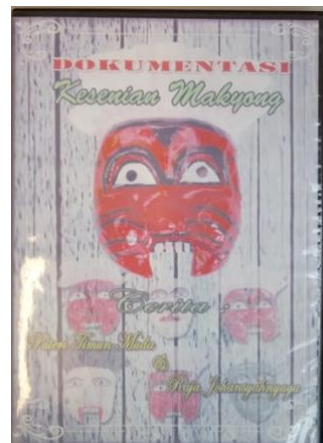


Figure 2. 2. DVD that accompanies the banner in the display. Photograph by Alan Darmawan.

<sup>12</sup> *Penao* originates from the word *penaung* (protector) or *tempat bernaung* (shelter).

<sup>13</sup> See Wan Empuk and Wan Malini (Shellabear 1995: 16).

<sup>14</sup> As many as 131 poets from across Indonesia and the Malay World contributed 300 poems to the first anthology titled *Jazirah* ("Peninsula") by the Festival Sastra Internasional Gunung Bintan in 2018 (Sutardji, Rida, and Hasan 2018). In the festival's second anthology—*Di Kaki Gunung Bintan* ("At the Foot of Mount Bintan")—in 2019, 38 poets contributed 134 poems (Rida K. Liamsi 2019).

Tuah, which may further support Bintan's claim as the ancestral land of the Malay.

Regarding the traditionalised identity of Bintan, the government of Bintan District sponsored cultural festivals to celebrate it. The Department of Tourism and Culture, which organises such events, involved local artists and people to perform art forms regarded as the cultural heritage of Bintan. To point out a few examples in the year 2017, Festival Teater Bintan and Festival Sungai Enam staged Malay gambus music, the social dance joget dangkong by female dancers, a local form of drama called celoteh, and mak yong. It is the department that endorsed the iconic form of traditional arts and chose mak yong as an artistic icon representing Bintan District. A display in the office building of the Department of Culture and Tourism shows a set of mak yong props, huge posters, a brochure for tourist promotion, and a VCD of mak yong performances. This elevates the status of the art form as an official heritage, artistic representation, and icon in tourist promotion.

Aswandi Syahri—who the department has sponsored to study, document, and publish his research on mak yong—discussed how cultural heritage in Bintan is turned into official heritage at an administrative level. As one of the districts in the province of Riau Islands, Bintan has made mak yong an official and iconic heritage. Aswandi stated that

after the establishment of new administrative territories, it is unavoidable that the administrative boundaries will consequently divide the ownership of traditional arts as cultural heritage, which we bring forward as identity markers to be proud of...The only traditional theatre form that is still left...and worthy for us to promote as an art form that will become a distinct identity marker in the near future is the traditional theatre mak yong (Aswandi Syahri 2005: 1–2).<sup>15</sup>

The significance of identity markers, as Aswandi indicates above, has presented an opportunity for local leaders. Ansar made a public address in support of the nomination of four mak yong manuscripts to UNESCO's Programme of the Memory of the World (the next section of this chapter will discuss this further). Speaking at an art festival in northern Bintan, Ansar delivered his speech as a call to audiences to support and celebrate the nomination.<sup>16</sup> Despite the UNESCO committee's rejection of the proposal (UNESCO 2011: 22), the speech had stimulated awareness of the art form as the heritage of Bintan and called the public's attention to it.

Ansar's successor, Apri Sujadi (2015–2020), followed him in giving his support to mak yong as an iconic heritage of Bintan. Apri attended Festival Mak Yong in Mantang Island that the village administration of Mantang Lama

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<sup>15</sup> Translated from the original text: Namun setelah pemekaran wilayah, mau tidak mau dan suka tidak suka, persoalan geo-politik dan batas-batas wilayah administrasi pemerintahan akan turut "membagi-bagi" pula "kepemilikan" warisan kesenian tradisional tersebut sebagai identitas yang akan dianjung dibanggakan.... Satu-satunya teater tradisional yang masih tersisa ... dan layak ditampilkan kemuka sebagai sebuah kesenian yang akan menjadi ciri khas daerah ini di masa mendatang adalah Teater Tradisional Mak Yong.

<sup>16</sup> Aswandi reported this situation in an article published in the local newspaper *Tanjungpinang Pos* on 27 February 2012 titled "Mak Yong, Dari Mantang Hingga UNESCO MOW 2011"

organised. In a public interview, he promised to bring mak yong into the school curricula throughout the district. Although the statement sounded like political posturing, it could serve as effective moral support that enhances the artists' and people's expectations to get attention from the local administration in sustaining their heritage. In a performative action, Apri himself participated in a procession at the opening of the Quran Recitation Contest (Musabaqah Tilawatil Quran/MTQ) in Daik, Lingga in 2018, in which he joined the contingent representing Bintan District in a parade performing mak yong's masked dance on the street up to the main stage.

What Bintan's district heads have shown between 2005 and 2020 indicates that traditionalisation employs several tools, including speeches, writings, museum exhibitions, and stage performances. The idea of Bintan as the "place of origin" of Malay civilisation pervades the discourse of cultural identity in the region as part of the whole narrative of continuity of the Riau Islands Province. From Bintan, the story continues to Riau, which refers to the historical polities of Johor-Riau (1528–1722) and Riau-Lingga (1722–1911). It is not ignoring Melaka and Johor, but the encouragement of the idea of "Riau" has to adjust with the current context of Riau Islands Province. If Bintan advances a reputation of being the "base" or "origin" of civilisation, "Riau" underlies a title given to Tanjung Pinang as the "peak" or the "centre" of Malay civilisation (*puncak tamadun Melayu* or *pusat tamadun Melayu*). This wording sounds more playful by making use of words. However, attempts that follow the creation of the title are necessary to be taken into account, as it manifests through the acts of traditionalising forms of culture, and especially here, mak yong theatre.

Tanjung Pinang's administration sponsored projects to improve graves and the royal settlement located upstream on Carang Creek (known locally as Sungai Carang or Sungai Riau).<sup>17</sup> Tombs of the viceroy of Riau-Lingga Sultanate (*Yamtuan Muda*), Daeng Marewa (r.1722–1728), Daeng Celak (r.1728–1745), Daeng Kamboja (1745–1777), and the structure of the royal settlement in the area reflect the efforts of the government to upgrade the graveyard, improve and paint the shelters, and build a gate to access the sites. Penyengat Island, the former base of the nineteenth-century vice royal palace, is the other site where heritage objects like structures and remnants of buildings preserved. The Indonesian government declared the island as part of the official heritage site of Indonesia in 2018. For Riau Islanders themselves, the island is significant for the local history for its role

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<sup>17</sup> Several names refer to different periods of Riau. Johor-Riau in the late seventeenth century was the time when Johor built the harbour city on the upstream Carang Creek in 1673 (Andaya 1975:104). Johor Kingdom dynasty moved its centre to the upstream area of Riau Creek known as the period of Riau-Johor (1722–1787), and then, moved further south to Lingga, which is known as Riau-Lingga-Johor-Pahang (1787–1824), which refers to the period before the London Treaty of 1824. After the treaty, it was Riau-Lingga (1824–1911). During this period, Riau was the territory under control of the Bugis-Malay vice royal family based on Penyengat Island. Yet, since 1900, the seat of the sultan in Lingga was moved to Penyengat Island.



as the centre of the literary activities in the nineteenth century Riau-Lingga Sultanate.

Tanjung Pinang town's Museum of Sultan Sulaiman Badrul Alamsyah (Sultan of Riau-Johor 1722–1760) preserved and exhibited manuscripts written or copied on Penyengat. The museum has also displayed silver coins that had once served as local currency, a replica of royal regalia as an emblematic object (*cogan*), weapons (dagger or *keris*), dioramas of a wedding ceremony, and mak yong theatre props. The story that the exhibition presents in chronological order is that Malay civilisation in the past had reached its peak via achievements represented by the coins (trade), regalia (sovereignty), literary works (manuscripts), diorama (ritual and ceremony), and mak yong (entertainment). Mak yong properties such as masks, costumes, and musical instruments form a display that shows it as being one of the entertainment forms developed under the patronage of the royal palace on Penyengat Island in the second half of the nineteenth century. The display, in this respect, conveys a story connecting mak yong theatre with the narrative of "Riau."



Figure 2. 3 Mak yong properties and musical instruments in the display of Museum of Tanjung Pinang, Sultan Sulaiman Badrul Alamsyah. Photograph by Alan Darmawan.

In accordance with the historical evidence in the museum, Tanjung Pinang's administration sponsors cultural festivals that involve mak yong groups to celebrate the historical "Riau" and its cultural heritage. At Festival Bahari Kepri, Safaruddin, the leader of a mak yong troupe from Yayasan Konservatori Seni Tanjung Pinang, introduced the art form to the audience. He pleaded with the audience to take care of mak yong as their heritage by emphasising the status of the art form as a world heritage that even UNESCO recognised. The fact that UNESCO had declared mak yong from Malaysia as a Masterpiece of the Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 2005 was the issue that Syafaruddin was referring to (UNESCO 2006: 64). With the circumstances of UNESCO's recognition of mak yong from Malaysia and the aim of encouraging people's concerns about the art

form, Safaruddin conveyed his story about mak yong that he was presenting on stage performed by a young troupe (Figure 2.4). Shortly before the performance, he announced that

our mak yong has reached Thailand and even been to Bali, thank God for that. We have performed it in Jambi, and simply, all over Indonesia. The last time was in Yogyakarta. Thank God, our mak yong has been introduced to others, from Medan to Bali ... and we knew already, we are happy and proud that our mak yong has been acknowledged worldwide ... certified, yet not upon us, but upon Malaysia. However, Malaysia kindly recognises that mak yong is our shared heritage.<sup>18</sup>

The use of the word *kite* (“our”) in the speech implies an effort to inculcate a sense of belonging. It also expresses pride and indicates attempts to increase attention to mak yong. In the context of the festival, mak yong was one of the performances that the organisers carried out to show cultural heritage linked to “Riau” to the audiences by presenting contests, a parade, exhibitions, and art performances. All displays, practices, and performances, such as poetry reading, theatre, dance, and music, aimed to bring a different story from “Bintan.” These performances attempted to popularise the narrative of “Riau” and monumentalise cultural heritage attributed to it.



Figure 2. 4 Female attendant Inang Pengasuh and heavenly princess, birdwoman Nang Nora in the play of *Wak Perambun* performed by Yayasan Konservatori Seni Tanjung Pinang at Festival Bahari Kepri in Tanjung Pinang, 15 October 2017. Photograph by Alan Darmawan.

At Festival Bahari Kepri, for instance, a boat race and boat parade took place on Carang Creek. Singers, dancers, musicians, actors, and poets performed

<sup>18</sup> Translated from the original speech that Safaruddin conveyed at Festival Bahari Kepri, 25 October 2017 in Tanjung Pinang: “Mak yong kite ni lah sampai ke Thailand, mak yong kite ni lah sampai ke Bali, alhamdulillah ke bali lah sampai. Lah sampai ke Jambi, dah sampai, keliling, keliling Indonesia. Yang terakhir adalah di Jogjakarta. Alhamdulillah mak yong kite ni dikenal luas, dari Medan sampai ke Bali [...] Dan kite dah tau, cukup bahagie, cukup bebangge, kerne mak yong kite ni sudah diakui dunie [...] cap, tapi bukan name kite, name Malaysia punye, tapi urang Malaysia ni bebaek hati tau, die bilang mak yong ni milik kite besame.”

on the main stage located in the front yard of the former Dutch resident's office in Tanjung Pinang. Also on the main stage, school children from Bintan and Tanjung Pinang participated in a contest of the recitation of Raja Ali Haji's aphoristic poem *Gurindam Duabelas*. The idea of the "peak of civilisation," to a significant extent, focuses on Malay literary tradition from nineteenth-century Riau-Lingga. Raja Ali Haji (1809–1872) is both the most respected writer and the author of *Gurindam Duabelas*, which Tanjung Pinang's authority pushed to be become official heritage.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, Tanjung Pinang made *Gurindam Duabelas* and the art of pantun into iconic heritage and branding with the title "the Town of Gurindam" and "the Country of Pantun" (*Tanjung Pinang Kota Gurindam, Negeri Pantun*).

Malay poets, activists, and Tanjung Pinang's administration promote literary tradition as the paramount of cultural life. An exhibition at Museum Sultan Sulaiman Badrul Alamsyah gives importance to the literary works of Raja Ali Haji to emphasise the root of Malay literary tradition in the Riau Islands. The ideas of "base," "source," and "ancestor" have become apparent since the current literati circle in the Riau Islands derive the genealogy of the tradition from Raja Ali Haji and the Malay authors from Penyengat from the mid-nineteenth century up to the early twentieth century. It is the current generation of poets who draw a link connecting themselves with the respected as Malay authors from the era of Riau-Lingga, such as Raja Ahmad, Haji Ibrahim, Raja Khalid Hitam, Aisyah Sulaiman, to name a few (Aswandi Syahri 2003; Abdul Kadir 2004; Tim Penyusun 2015).

The present generation of poets (call themselves *penyair*) in Riau Islands, especially those who work in Tanjung Pinang have played a central role in the formation of Malay identity and heritage, and also give more importance to the Malay-Bugis vice royal family and their descendants on Penyengat. This tendency has implicitly perpetuated tensions between the vice royal family and the Malay sultan and his family on Lingga Island. The current groups of performers, cultural workers, as well as the district government of Lingga respond to the dissemination of the idea of "Riau" by promoting the idea of "Lingga" and the story about it. Despite contesting the story that Tanjung Pinang has boosted, the narrative of "Lingga" is still part of the storyline continuing "Bintan" and "Riau."

The narrative of "Lingga" refers to the historical polity located in Daik on Lingga Island made as the settlement for the royal family of Riau-Lingga. The story is told from the viewpoint of the Malay sultan's dynasty and emphasises moving the name of "Lingga" to the front of the dynasties' name: Lingga-Riau-Johor-Pahang (1787–1824) and Lingga-Riau (1825–1900).<sup>20</sup> The local administration and cultural workers drive the attempts to pursue a reputation of Lingga District as the "motherland of the Malays" (*Bunda Tanah Melayu*). In this sense,

<sup>19</sup> For a closer look at Raja Ali Haji, see the edition of his letters (Van der Putten and Al Azhar 1995). Tanjung Pinang administration sponsored the publication of the edition of *Gurindam* with commentaries (Al Azhar 2009) and the central government declared it as national heritage in 2013.

<sup>20</sup> The perspective from Lingga looking at Malay history has been a concern of one of the descendants of the royal family in Lingga, who wrote *Keringkasan Sedjarah Melayu* (Matheson 1986).

the term “mother” refers to the idea of “base,” “place of origin,” and the place to where one returns. This title was first coined in 1997 at the gathering of Malay authors from across the Malay World at Perkampungan Penyair, which was initiated by GAPENA and organised by the Centre for Malay Studies of Universitas Riau. Participants of the event wrote poems and travelogues and published their works as an anthology that showed their admiration for the Lingga people’s way of life that was regarded as “pure” and “authentic” Malay in terms of language, cooking, housing, hospitality, and the likes (Rejab FI 2000). Lingga was an underdeveloped subdistrict until 2004.<sup>21</sup> The authors who came from the urban areas found their presence in Daik, the former base of the Malay sultan, as if being on one’s mother’s lap. In his address to the participants, Yusmar Yusuf drew a connection between the remnants of royal settlements, the living traditions, and Lingga’s past, which underlie the idea of Daik as the motherland of the Malay.

In 2010, Balai Pelestarian Nilai Budaya (BPNB) of Riau Islands organised a visit to historical sites in Lingga called Lawatan Sejarah Daerah (LASEDA) and revisited the expression that Yusmar Yusuf proclaimed at the event Perkampungan Penyair. With the help of local cultural workers, the district government formalised it to become the title of Lingga District and inserted it into Lingga’s official logo.<sup>22</sup> Such a title implies a will to earn self-esteem that is followed by the acts to realise it. Moving forward with such a title, Lingga District sponsored the local initiatives in cultural production to make itself fit to carry the reputation of being the Malay motherland. These efforts have shaped cultural configurations, in which the agents deploy the narrative of “Lingga” to contextualise *mak yong*.

The local administration sponsored the making of an official list of heritage objects found in the administrative territory of Lingga District (Zukifli 2012). Its Department of Culture built and administers Museum Linggam Cahaya and manages the collections that it obtained from the local people who sold or donated them. Other than photographs of royal family members of Riau-Lingga and manuscripts, the museum has collected old kitchen utensils, household devices and equipment, and the likes. The main exhibition of the museum conveys the narrative of “Lingga” as the former place of the sultan’s throne with its food supply, military defense, and resistance against the Dutch with their centre of power in Tanjung Pinang, which gave more pressure to the vice royal family on Penyengat Island. The iconic historical figure that represents the glory of “Lingga” is Sultan Mahmud Ri’ayat Syah (r. 1761–1812).

The district of Lingga nominated Sultan Mahmud Ri’ayat Syah to obtain the status of an Indonesian national hero, which took about five years before Indonesian President Joko Widodo bestowed this title in November 2017. The local

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<sup>21</sup> From 2004 onward, Lingga has been given a status as a district so it can accelerate development in its administrative territory.

<sup>22</sup> This title has been officially made and inserted into the official logo of Lingga District through the Local Regulation No. 20 of 2012. Subsequently, the provincial administration adopted it to make the title for Riau Islands Province, which is also “the motherland of the Malays.”

administration established a team of experts who composed the historical narrative that justified the proposal for the nomination. The narrative about Sultan Mahmud mainly emphasised his life story, where he fought against the Dutch in Melaka in the late eighteenth century and drove the Dutch troops away from the waters of Tanjung Pinang with the help of Ilanun people from Tempasuk, northern Borneo, before subsequently moving south to the island of Lingga (Abdul Malik 2017: 12). The story of the sultan's move becomes an important part of the idea of "Lingga," which is regarded for consistency in its political stance against the Dutch and the initial effort to build a military base and new centre for the Malay political realm in Lingga. Cultural workers and political leaders recently exaggerated the story to signify the move of power centre from "Riau" to "Lingga." They organised the International Festival of Dignifying Malay Civilisation (Perhelatan Memuliakan Tamadun Melayu Antarbangsa) in 2017 to popularise the story and celebrate the success of their nomination.



Figure 2. 5 Mak yong performance by the troupe from Yayasan Konservatori Seni Tanjung Pinang, at Festival Perhelatan Memuliakan Tamadun Melayu in Daik, Lingga, 25 November 2017. Photograph by Alan Darmawan.

The organisers of the festival invited participants to join a ritual practice, *mandi safar*, and to enjoy watching traditional games, such as kite flying (*layang-layang*) and spinning tops (*main gasing*). Contingents that represented villages and schools across Lingga District paraded along the main street of Daik in traditional dress to demonstrate some ritual ceremonies, such as those for marriage and circumcision. Every night in the main stage of the festival, artists performed various kinds of dances, music, and theatre like *bangsawan* and *mak yong*.



Yayasan Konservatori Seni (YKS), a mak yong troupe from Tanjung Pinang, took part in the event (Figure 2.5). It performed for about two and a half hours, which was much longer than any other recent performances (see Chapter 5). Apart from the stage performance, researchers from BPNB Kepulauan Riau (Centre for the Preservation of Cultural Values) curated an exhibition of mak yong displaying masks and props in Museum Linggam Cahaya for visitors (Figure 2.6).

The act of traditionalising mak yong appears in a story that Aswandi Syahri has written in his book on the history of mak yong related to the Malay sultan in Lingga, although it does not show adequate data to support it (2005: 41-44). Nevertheless, the narrative that he put forward is notable in the act of traditionalisation. It was Sultan Mahmud Ri'ayat Syah (Mahmud III) ruling Lingga-Riau-Johor-Pahang who heard about a mak yong troupe residing on Tekong Island near Singapore in 1789. Sultan Mahmud invited the troupe to perform in the royal house in Lingga. Yet an envoy, Laksamana Muhammad Yusuf, successfully brought the troupe in 1811 in the reign of Sultan Abdul Rahman Syah (r.1811–1831). The performance took place over the course of fifteen days in 1826 at the royal court at Damnah, after which the troupe allegedly visited Penyengat Island. During the time in Daik, Awang Keladi, who was the leader of the troupe, died and was buried in the village of Kuta on the banks of the Daik River. Despite the details about the time and place, there is a lack of historical evidence in writing this narrative. Aswandi's effort, therefore, should be looked at as traditionalisation of mak yong.

Figure 2. 6 School children take a look at a mak yong exhibition at Museum Linggam Cahaya during their visit to Perhelatan Memuliakan Tamadun Melayu Antarbangsa in Lingga. Photograph by Alan Darmawan.



The story about the supernatural realm connects mak yong as a way of embedding the art form to popular beliefs in Lingga. As the leader of the YKS troupe, Said Parman warned the young performers to behave properly in the “Malay motherland” during the stage performance, as well as before and after it.

Attending the live performance, I noticed the hilarious stage acts and positive audience response to the jokes and comical gestures. People and artists commented on the improvisation, which they said to have been favoured by the invisible elves (*bunian*) from the mountainous forest surrounding Daik. Many believe that *bunian* change their appearance into human form and come at night to watch mak yong as they enjoy this type of entertainment.

The above festival celebrated the story of “Lingga”. The narrative marks the last “glorious” era of Riau-Lingga before the move of the power centre to Penyengat that was in turn dissolved by the Dutch in 1911. Instead of looking at the discontinuity, the narrative of traditionalisation connects the era of Malay kingdoms with the present-day Riau Islands Province. The narrative of continuity denotes a direct link, through which the predecessors are regarded to have passed down heritage traditions to the present generation of the Riau Islands. “Erecting the submerged tree trunk” implies an effort of the present generation to revive the “glory” that the ancestors achieved, which entails the reinstatement of tradition. In the case of mak yong, the district and provincial authorities play an important role to distribute grants, provide occasions to perform, and become a patron for the current development of the tradition.

### **Reinstatement of tradition and local patronage**

Traditionalisation proceeds to support the reinstatement of mak yong practices with support from the local government. In the past, it was the Riau-Lingga sultanate that protected and sponsored mak yong troupes. This responsibility now has been taken by the provincial and district governments. Tanjung Pinang, Bintan, and Lingga Districts support the reinstatement of mak yong practices through projects of heritage-making and cultural festivals. The local administrations act as new patrons for the groups of mak yong performers by providing opportunities for performance, such as at cultural festivals, which they rely on to reinstate the art form. Attempts that stimulate the local artists to reinstate the tradition are a grant—allocated from the local budget (APBD)—and the organisation of cultural festivals.

In order to help promote these initiatives, the governments at the provincial and district levels have set up small grants (*bantuan sosial/bansos*) and distribute them to the performers based on their respective administrative territories. Two mak yong resident groups in Mantang and Kijang received grants from Bintan’s administration as they were officially registered and based their activities in the territory of Bintan District. Also, they all are eligible for funds that the Riau Islands Province distributes. When I visited Mantang Island, I noticed that Sanggar Bungsu Sakti (SBS) purchased its musical instruments with the province’s grant money. Although several smaller grants are always available, the performers must have either direct or indirect connections to the elites in bureaucracy as there is poor transparency for most funding procedures. In this possibility to access grants from the local budget, the groups of artists seem to not rely much on the Art Council (Dewan Kesenian) of the Riau Islands and LAM, which ideally function to mediate

the groups to the local governments. Instead, the two organisations became dependent on the government and focused on their own business, like Dewan Kesenian publishing the collections of poems and LAM giving titles to the local elites.

Another attempt that local administrations have made is organising cultural festivals. These festivals are periodic events. Hence the local administrations (i.e. Department of Culture and Tourism) have incorporated mak yong into the calendar of touristic events following the disbursement of the local budget that the local authority administers, which is usually between August and December. Most events take place in the second half of the calendar year. Within the term, the organisers of festivals in Bintan, Tanjung Pinang, and Lingga invited other Malay artists from around the Malay World. At these events, the performers stage mak yong before the public—both local people and tourists who are coming from (or via) neighboring countries, such as Singapore and Malaysia.

In these events, the organisers and the mak yong performers discuss topics as varied as performance duration, types of stages, and fees (more details about the duration and stage performance will appear in Chapter 4). Despite some negotiations, the local governments fix the fee based primarily on their budget and apply it to the performers who depend, to a certain extent, on the events and the governments' expenditures to finance their performances. In this regard, the artists are not considered as professionals who make a living from their performances, but rather, as cultural workers who form their groups on a not-for-profit business structure. Such a point of view is rooted in Malay activism and voluntarism forged during the early period of the cultural renaissance in the 1980s that was centered in Pekanbaru as a form of resistance against the central government and "Indonesianisation." However, the cultural workers and mak yong artists in Riau Islands are now in close cooperation with the local authorities in shaping and promoting Malayness. Efforts to elevate Malay identity, in this sense, are regarded as giving support to the local administrations as a patron.

Local patronage emerged in the context of decentralised politics in Indonesia, which brought the state's administration to the people or brought public services up to the beneficiaries. Local administration, in this respect, has the authority to plan and execute its projects using local resources and budgets, and involve local people's participation. Local culture is one of the resources that the administration pays much attention to for the purpose of creating a commodified local identity for developing the tourism sector. Groups of artists who work voluntarily turn to grab chances in the development of local tourism as part of economic development in the region. The artists formalise their organisations and training centres to be engaged with the local identity formation and touristic promotion. Patronage takes its form in an exchange relation. The patron needs objects to make into tourist attraction and distinctive attributes of identity politics. Meanwhile, the local artists need occasional events and material support to sustain and inherit the revived tradition. This contributes to stimulating art production and the formation of a group of performers, including mak yong and its practitioners.



This patronage, however, seems more fluid rather than fixed. Growing numbers of groups of performers and the (re)invention of traditions have demanded more attention from the administration. The dynamics and personalised local politics and the limitation of local budget do not allow the local government to extensively support all groups and traditional arts. The succession of a local leader, either a mayor/district head or governor, results in the change of priority in development according to personal or party preferences. Cultural performers in the Riau Islands (poets, musicians, and mak yong actors) shared with me their view on the local leaders' attention to cultural production. They compared two former mayors of Tanjung Pinang: Suryatati Manan (2003–2013) gave more attention to the revitalisation of Malay tradition than her successor, Lis Darmansyah (2013–2018). Another comparison is the district heads of Bintan: Ansar Ahmad (2005–2015) was more concerned with the revitalisation of Malay tradition than his successor, Apri Sujadi (2015–2020). Fluid patronage leads to the instability of protection and the client's expectations with each change among the ruling political elites, and also the orientation of local administrations in steering the development.

Cultural festivals, which mak yong groups of performers rely on, persist. However, the instability of financial assistance cannot guarantee material support to mak yong tradition, despite several regular events that provide occasions to perform. Despite being reliant on administrative funding, mak yong groups additionally seek other grants from the central government and performance opportunities from other agencies, such as local and national television companies, or local and international researchers looking for source materials. The latter are outsiders that contribute to the development of the art form and provide alternative ways in which the tradition can survive.

### **Outsiders' support: grants, authentication, and institutionalisation**

Despite some limitations, local administrations in the Riau Islands have stimulated art production, allowing groups of performers to intensify their activities. As a result of *reformasi*, decentralisation of Indonesian politics, and the proliferation of new administrative territory, regional identity played its roles in local politics and flourished along with the establishment of a new district or province. Ethnic identity represents the administrative territories. As tourism has also become an important tool in economic development, local identity and culture have flourished. In Riau Islands, traditionalisation has taken place in a way that the district and provincial governments boost the narrative of continuity that connects the people, administrative territory, culture, and tradition to the past. Local identity, history, and art performance flourish in a new consciousness of being and/or becoming Malay. In response to this development, the central government has been attempting to control it instead of confining its stream. In this context, besides the state, persons and institutions outside the Riau Islands also contribute to the traditionalisation of mak yong through grants, authentication, and institutionalisation of the art form.

Encouragement and control over local cultures and identities have taken place through the distribution of state grants with a relatively bigger amount than the local authority has funded. However, this is not merely a distribution of grants. The state has pushed the formalisation of local groups of performers and requires a formal status for applicants of certain grants. The leaders of the groups created a formal organisational structure and institutionalised their organisations through governmental registration. This included by using the public notary's registration number, tax identification number, and setting up bank accounts, something that had never been done before.<sup>23</sup> Hence the state has driven mak yong groups to bear legal statuses as a formal organisations and has introduced certain norms to the group. For example, those who are put on the organisational structure have to be involved in the decision-making processes or, at least, must be informed about it. This aims to create transparent financial management taking its income from the state grants. However, key figures who have knowledge, skills, and authority to lead their groups have attempted to manage their organisations from among their own family members. This created tension on this particular issue, since the leaders conceive of mak yong props at the training centre as family assets and decide how they should spend the funds. The state's intent, though, is to regulate the groups as public institutions by using the grants for their expenditure.

Several directorates of the Ministry of Education and Culture issued a call for applications for grants and appointed BPNB Kepulauan Riau to assess the applications to provide a recommendation in selecting successful applicants. The Directorate of Belief in One God and Tradition (Kepercayaan Terhadap Tuhan Yang Maha Esa dan Tradisi) distributes grants by the name of Facilitating Cultural Communities in Society (Fasilitasi Komunitas Budaya di Masyarakat/FKBM). Meanwhile, the Directorate of Arts (Direktorat Kesenian) from the same ministry distributes a grant called the Grant of Indonesian House of Culture (Bantuan Rumah Budaya Nusantara/BRBN). Both grants are in the amount of 100 to 150 million rupiah (EUR 6,080 to 9,125).<sup>24</sup>

Mak yong groups in Mantang and Kijang received FKBM in 2013 and 2014. One group in Setokok Island in Batam received FKBM in 2018, and one group in Tanjung Pinang received BRBN in 2015. Reports to the Ministry of Education and Culture revealed that the groups spent most of the money to renew their equipment. Nevertheless, rumours and gossip that circulated suggested that a few main personnel who controlled the groups spent the money mostly on their own personal interests. While the state stimulates the groups to become not-for-profit institutions, the individual artists realistically use the grants to support their domestic economy to make them able to concentrate on mak yong production.

<sup>23</sup> Requirements of a formal organisation is based on the law concerning civil society organisation, Law No. 85 of 1985, which has been amended in Law No. 17 of 2013 (See Article 12).

<sup>24</sup> All the conversions to the rest of this chapter is based on the exchange rate (provided by European Commission) in the actual time period of the distribution of grants or other payments. See InforEuro: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/how-eu-funding-works/information-contractors-and-beneficiaries/exchange-rate-inforeuro\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/how-eu-funding-works/information-contractors-and-beneficiaries/exchange-rate-inforeuro_en).

Despite mechanisms and requirements, the application for grants has become a business for the local artists and those who are experienced in writing proposals. A mak yong leader in Kijang who claimed to be an experienced applicant offered services to other groups (any troupes not necessarily mak yong) for assistance to formalise their organisations, write, and submit their proposals. Regardless of the acceptance of the proposal, these processes required fees that the proposal-maker can earn. For the recipients, grants from the state also mean recognition. Outsiders' acknowledgment has become important. In this regard, the troupes presume that by receiving grants, they obtain recognition from outsiders. Additionally, these outsiders also become a new consumer or mediator of the art form to larger audiences. They are not only the state institutions, but also researchers and television companies.

Researchers come to the Riau Islands to collect first-hand source materials and also request for live performances. The typically 30-minute duration for mak yong performances at cultural festivals creates several problems for them. Because of this, researchers have commissioned some troupes to perform for time-specific durations. Even though these research visits are less frequent than government-sponsored cultural festivals, they give the opportunity for troupe leaders to negotiate about the stage performance and their fees. Unlike local authorities that apply a certain rate based on their budget, some outsiders bargain with mak yong leaders to stage a performance. To a certain extent, the researchers' interests contribute to groups' abilities at keeping the art form active, which benefits the local artists.

Exchanges between researchers and local artists, to a certain extent, have become a business for the leaders of mak yong groups. The first time I met with Satar, he asked me if I wanted to commission a performance so we can negotiate everything as long as the fee is suitable for them. However, as I studied the art production as it was taking place without my intervention or commission, this question did not appear anymore. This was also the case in other encounters with other artists too. The video recordings that I took were from public performances at cultural festivals. Nevertheless, Satar's question indicates his attitude toward outsiders, which is as business partners. The other artists told me about the commissions that meant a lot to the performers for their reputations outside the local communities of the Riau Islands. Requests for performances in the eyes of local artists are not solely an occasion that they can earn money, but also an event at which they show off to the audience that their production and performance of mak yong has received recognition from those even outside of the region.

Pudentia Maria Purenti Sri Suniarti, a lecturer from Universitas Indonesia, conducted a survey on mak yong in the early 1990s. She wrote her Ph.D. dissertation on the orality of the art form at the university (Pudentia MPSS 2000). She established the ATL, which is concerned with studying and documenting oral tradition. In 2008, Pudentia returned to the Riau Islands with a grant from the Ministry of Tourism to commission performances of three groups of mak yong from Batam, Kijang, and Mantang Island. The video recordings of the last two

groups can be found in Leiden University Library,<sup>25</sup> in which both recordings contain incomplete performances of *Megat Muda* and *Gunung Berintan* stories.<sup>26</sup>

Although making recordings could be useful for international researchers, Pudentia's undertakings through the ATL promoted the authentication of mak yong. In a presentation at the workshop on cultural heritage in Malaysia, she shared her experience with other participants, especially ATL project's on mak yong. She divides mak yong theatre tradition into two categories. The first is the one that ATL considered as authentic with its "original" form and "has been preserved for research purposes." The second category is those that are to be developed "for tourists" with performances that last for about ten to fifteen minutes as a condensed version "without subtracting the 'essence' of mak yong theatre." For Pudentia, mak yong in the second category seems to fit with the tourism promotion in Lagoi area in the northern part of Bintan Island.<sup>27</sup> This second category represents the idea of exoticising and commodifying mak yong to adjust it to the tourists' tastes. The first category, however, indicates the act of authenticating mak yong, of making it in its "original form."

Authentication of mak yong is also carried out by the state institution. The central government institutionalises Intangible Cultural Heritage (*Warisan Budaya Tak Benda*) through the Education and Culture's Ministerial Regulation 106/2013.<sup>28</sup> According to Article 2 of this regulation, there are five categories of intangible heritage that the government officially and systematically registers, inscribes, and declares as national heritage.<sup>29</sup> These include oral tradition and oral expression; performing arts; customs and rituals and celebrations; knowledge and practices regarding nature; and handicraft. As the regulation mandates, the General

<sup>25</sup> See Leiden University Library: "Seni Tradisi Mak Yong: Raja Megat Muda," UB.GM. 7001 A 26; "Seni Tradisi Mak Yong: Gunung Berintan," UB.GM. KITLV4 D CD2730 and KITLV4 D CD 5127.

<sup>26</sup> There is no exact content of *Raja Megat Muda* story as the performers played only the prelude part and a chunk of the content of story, so it is not clear where the story would go. The *Gunung Berintan* story is also known as *Raja Bungsu Sakti*. I thoroughly analysed this story as performed by a troupe from Tanjung Pinang, Yayasan Konservatori Seni, which is slightly different from that of the Mantang Island version (see the philological edition in Chapter 5).

<sup>27</sup> I paraphrase part of her talk, where a Swiss friend of hers who was working at one of the resorts was interested in learning more about Malay culture. Pudentia said: "Nah di sini kemudian timbul pertanyaan, pada waktu itu juga, bagaimana membina, katakanlah mak yong yang sudah kami berpengalaman di dalam hal ini untuk di Riau, mana mak yong yang untuk penelitian saja, artinya mak yong group untuk memang penelitian dalam arti mempertahankan asli, apa adanya dan semua yang semula jadi gitu. Atau, ada yang pariwisata, karena di hotel di Bintan misalnya di Bintan Utara kita punya Bintan Resort, di sana juga memerlukan. Di sana ada rekan kerja kami orang Swiss yang sangat menghargai budaya Melayu bertanya, lalu dia bertanya, 'tamu-tamu di sini bertanya mana Melayu-nya' [...] lalu mereka mencoba mencari Melayu." There is no detail about the date, topic, and place of the workshop, but ATL published it officially as documentation in October 2011. See the footage online titled "Tradisi Lisan Sebagai Warisan Budaya oleh Dr Pudentia MPSS Video 1" by retrieving it through the following link: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QAvz8NiLZG4>> last accessed on 27 August 2020.

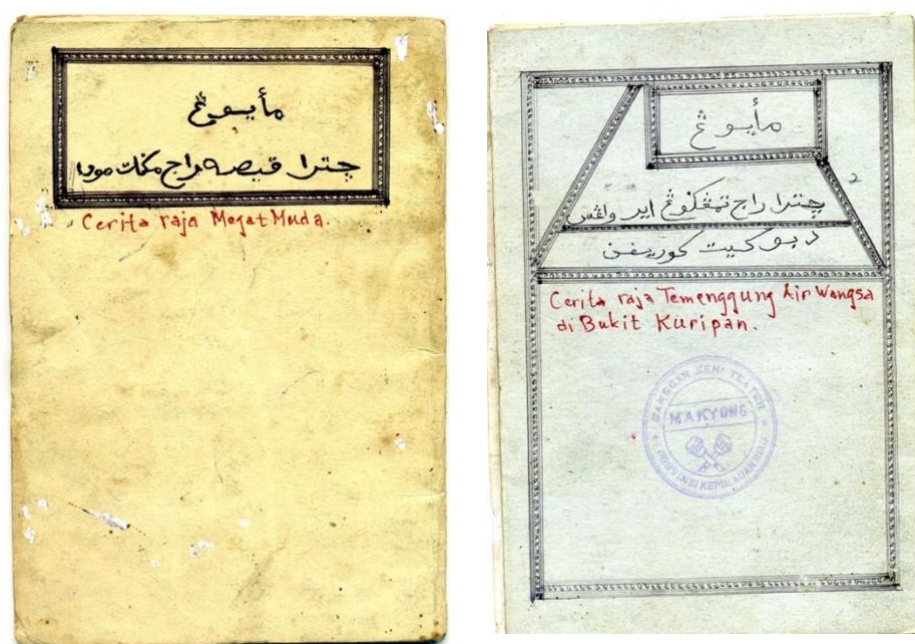
<sup>28</sup> Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia Nomor 106 Tahun 2013 tentang Warisan Budaya Tak Benda.

<sup>29</sup> Articles 5, 6, and 7 of the Regulation 106/2013 regulates the procedures and mechanism of registration (pendaftaran), inscription (pencatatan), and declaration (penetapan) of the intangible heritage.

Directorate of Culture of the Ministry of Education and Culture set up a committee of specialists (*Tim Ahli Warisan Budaya Tak Benda* or the Committee for Intangible Cultural Heritage) and renew it every two years. The committee, in this mechanism, declared and put 77 items up for being national heritage on the official list in 2013, one of which is mak yong from the Riau Islands within the category of oral tradition.<sup>30</sup>

The institutionalisation of mak yong goes further to keep the art form alive by bestowing one of its caretakers as “Maestro Seni Tradisi.” If the above declaration institutionalises the tradition through the inscription defining its form (see the official list on the website: <https://warisanbudaya.kemdikbud.go.id>), the bestowal of the title “Maestro Seni Tradisi” creates and institutionalises the caretaker of the tradition. In 2014, the Minister of Education and Culture bestowed the title upon eight practitioners chosen by the selection committee, one of whom was Rohaya as the Maestro of mak yong tradition from Kijang (see p. 47). In December 2014, Rohaya received a certificate, gold breastpin, and money of 50 million rupiah (EUR 3,295).<sup>31</sup>

Earlier in 2010, there had been an effort to nominate mak yong to the international level. This was through the nomination of four handwritten notebooks



Figures 2. 7 booklets that contain mak yong plays and instructions for the performance titled *Cetera Raja Megat Muda* (left) and *Cetera Raja Temenggung Air Wangsa di Bukit Kuripan*. Dimensions: 15.5 cm (wide), 21 cm (height), in average 21 lines per page, and written with ballpoint. Photograph: courtesy of ATL through Dick van der Meij.

<sup>30</sup> Keputusan Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan (Ministrial Decree) Nomor 238/M/2013 tentang Warisan Budaya Takbenda (Intangible Cultural Heritage) Indonesia Tahun 2013.

<sup>31</sup> Keputusan Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan (Ministrial Decree) Nomor 240/P/2014 tentang Penerima Anugerah Kebudayaan dan Maestro Seni Tradisi Tahun 2013.

of mak yong plays to the Committee for the UNESCO's Programme of the Memory of the World. In the application proposal jointly submitted by the Indonesian National Committee of the Memory of the World and the ATL,<sup>32</sup> the nominators emphasise the originality and authenticity of the small books that serve as proof of the coming of the tradition (Part A). More specifically, the nominators accentuate certain aspects of the booklets by giving weight to the local initiatives of the people writing them without any commission from the Dutch colonial rule in the region during the time of writing, which is estimated in the early twentieth century. There is no indication of the time of writing whatsoever, but the nominators argue that the books are "unique" and "original" as indicated by orthographic peculiarities without any influences from outside forces.<sup>33</sup>

It is apparent that the text shows peculiarities and inconsistencies in spelling, which seem not to conform to the contemporary standard orthography that the nominators assume, which is the early twentieth century. However, the uniqueness, peculiarity, and locality (surmised to have been written on Mantang Island) that the nominators underline and expect to have been the crucial points of the manuscripts, have been evaluated as insignificant to be considered as the memory of the world. In the tenth meeting of the International Advisory Committee of the Memory of the World Programme in Manchester, the committee decided that

Mak Yong was declared in 2005 by UNESCO to be a masterpiece of oral and intangible heritage. The manuscript itself, dating from the early 20th century, is unique in presenting theatrical performances, songs, and dances, with instructions and narrations. While recognizing the value of a unique documentation of a performance that had been passed down by oral means, the IAC was not convinced that international significance had been adequately reflected in the nomination (UNESCO 2011: 22).

Despite the rejection, there is still a determination to renominate mak yong at the international level. Pudentia, who was one of the members of the Indonesian Committee for the Memory of the World, affirmed the plan of renominating mak yong as world heritage. She admitted this interest had not yet materialised into a concrete plan for the next nomination but rather would focus more generally about the aim of looking for a chance in a certain category to which the Indonesian state can nominate mak yong as something that is distinctly different from Malaysia's mak yong.<sup>34</sup> Pudentia's explication reveals that the desire to get this international recognition lies in the legal claim of ownership of cultural property to protect Indonesian heritage from the claim of its neighbour, Malaysia, through registration, declaration, and certification of the intangible cultural heritage. This stance is rooted in political and cultural contestations between Indonesia and Malaysia

<sup>32</sup> The Memory of the World Register, Mak Yong Documentation (Indonesia), Ref. No. 2010-66.

<sup>33</sup> Al Azhar, who studied mak yong in 1989 especially the troupe led by Tuk Atan in Kijang, never found such small booklets. Rather, he found Tuk Atan's notes of plays and instructions written in Roman script in a 100-page notebook (personal communication with Al Azhar, 10 September 2020; and see also his unpublished report (Al Azhar 1989)). It remains unclear how Pudentia, who came in early 1990s, obtained the booklets from Tuk Atan.

<sup>34</sup> Personal communication with Pudentia in Leiden, December 2019.

(Chong 2012; Clark 2013) and, to a significant extent, is different from the Malay World communities' consciousness of sharing a host of cultural heritage with the people across national borders. These attitudes illustrate that the cultural configurations that the Indonesian state has shaped are different from that of the Malay World. Between these two arrangements, the Malay activists and artists in the Riau Islands build their networks to participate in the Malay World as well as be part of Indonesia.

Networking and mediation are undertakings in maintaining support for mak yong along with the authentication and institutionalisation. ATL introduced mak yong tradition and its performers to academia in Australia and Europe. The performers take advantage of experience in performing the art form overseas and in gaining acknowledgement from communities outside Riau Islands. However, the limitation of financial support demanded a selection of performers to assemble a small group of performers traveling to Monash University in Melbourne in 2015<sup>35</sup> and Naples' University L' Orientale in 2013.<sup>36</sup> Pudentia chose the group from Kijang led by Satar. With such experience, the chosen troupe can claim to have external recognition and accuse other groups of being "inauthentic."

Pak Gani and his group from Mantang countered the accusation of inauthenticity by asserting the "authenticity" of their group. In my visit to Mantang, Pak Gani told me about his experiences in staging mak yong over the course of a few nights in a wooden shed with kerosene lamps for lighting, which Singaporean theatre producer Zai Kuning commissioned in 2013. Zai spent a week in Mantang to get in touch with the performers, interviewing them, and recording a mak yong performance.<sup>37</sup> A two-night performance was recorded in 2014 at the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) in Singapore. This screening was preceded by a live performance of *Raja Bungsu Sakti* play in 2010 as Zai invited the troupe to perform at Night Festival: New World.<sup>38</sup> This has expanded the scale of audiences from the Riau Islands to academics in Australia and Italy and also tourists in Singapore. Also, it has provided another way of presentation of the art form, from only-live performances to screen.

Electronic media helps to promote mak yong and also serves as material support for the artists. Despite allowing for mak yong to reach larger audiences, the media limits the duration of a mak yong presentation. Indonesian commercial television station METRO TV commissioned a mak yong performance for recording in mid-October 2017. Kijang-based Malay activist Mustafa Abbas had

<sup>35</sup> The performance in Melbourne was held in conjunction with the Second Symposium of the Malay Musical Arts of Indonesia's Riau Islands, 14–16 January 2015 (Kartomi 2019: x–xi).

<sup>36</sup> Mak yong performance was at the Indonesian cultural event (exhibition, seminar, and performing art) coordinated by Antonia Soriente at the Department of Asia, Africa, and Mediterania, the University of Naples the Oriental, 10–11 November 2013.

<sup>37</sup> See part of Zai Kuning's recordings: <<https://vimeo.com/75733685>> accessed 1 February 2021.

<sup>38</sup> Some of the stories I heard from Pak Gani while others I took from a note that Zai Kuning has written on his blog titled "Transmission of Knowledge: they get up from their knees and walk". <<https://dapuntahyang2018.wordpress.com/transmission-of-knowledge-they-get-up-from-their-knees-and-walk/>> accessed on 27 August 2020.



suggested that the METRO TV crews record Satar's group. With his experience in the previous recording commissioned by the regional branch of the national television network TVRI, Satar was quite confident to meet the request and demanded a rate of 4 million rupiah (EUR 245). This is a profitable income that the performers could earn with less intensive rehearsal and production costs. The recording process was also relaxed, in which the director requested to repeat some sections they had already performed. The group played only the prelude sequence including dialogue between the king and the male royal attendant, Awang Pengasuh.

The recording was put into special coverage on Malay culture and the Riau Islands in a program called *IDONESIA* (an acronym from *Ide Untuk Indonesia*, ideas for Indonesia). Aired and put online on YouTube at the beginning of the following month, the program featured mak yong in one section that lasted about two and a half minutes.<sup>39</sup> It was merely a short clip combined with other cultural forms from the Riau Islands. Another commercial television station, CNN Indonesia, recorded a mak yong performance by Yayasan Konservatori Seni Tanjung Pinang in 2018 for special coverage as well.<sup>40</sup> This mediation indicates that mak yong is not merely presented for the local but more general public of Indonesia and anyone who wants to see it on the Internet. However, commissions from commercial television are infrequent projects so the performers cannot make a living from those. Since the performers cannot rely on grants and rare commissions from television stations, they have tried to initiate their own efforts to commercialise mak yong.

### **Community's support and commercialisation**

As the local government attempts to traditionalise mak yong as an identity marker of the Riau Islands through narratives that connect the art form with the past, outsiders support traditionalisation through recognition, authentication, grants, and commissions for performance. *Tradisi* or "tradition" has become a label that impresses a sense of authenticity. The performers utilise the sensitivity and nostalgic feelings for "tradition" to promote mak yong to the public. By using the label *tradisi*, two troupes in Kijang and Tanjung Pinang have started their initiatives to commercialise mak yong. Meanwhile, a troupe on Mantang Island promotes the art form through support from people in the village.

From his experience in performing mak yong for commission with his Sanggar Mak Yong Warisan (SMW), Satar has made a fixed tariff for group performances. The rate is applied as a minimum price, which is 4 million rupiah (EUR 235; October 2017). It includes all items prepared for live a performance, such as cosmetics for female performers, travel cost to the location, music

<sup>39</sup> See the footage online <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vz-0BqHOGRE>> in which mak yong is played in a short duration between 5:00 and 7:31. Accessed on 27 August 2020.

<sup>40</sup> See the footage online <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t\\_7\\_3E35C8g&list=PLmriyx1tVZAzi-InJPjVIkLjr6Fq2APzL&index=20](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t_7_3E35C8g&list=PLmriyx1tVZAzi-InJPjVIkLjr6Fq2APzL&index=20)> accessed on 27 August 2020. The narrator discusses mak yong between 11:08 and 16:58.



instruments (counted as rental property), honorarium for himself as the leader, and honorarium for actors according to their roles. For example, the actors acting as the clown and the king get paid 200 thousand rupiah (EUR 12.60), while the ladies-in-waiting get paid 50 thousand rupiah (EUR 3.15). These items indicate the way of distributing money, in which Satar gets more than the others because he gets paid for being the leader and receives the fee for the rental of the music instruments. This is the relevance of retaining mak yong properties as personal belongings, where part of the income will be taken for the musical instruments rental fee.

Compared to other music and dance entertainment forms in the region, this rate is notably more expensive. Sanggar Joget Dangkong Melayu Serumpun Bersatu, a Malay music and dance group from the east coast of Bintan Island, applies a low rate to compete with the popular music played by the electronic keyboard for karaoke of one to three singers known as *organ tunggal*. The leader of the group, Pak Sumadi, charges a rate of about 800 thousand rupiah (within their village), and 1.2 million rupiah to play outside the village (EUR 50.35 to 75.50; October 2017). Consisting of at least four male musicians and four female dancers, the group competes with *organ tunggal* by applying approximately the same rate. More specific requests are subject to negotiation, such as the duration and the number of performers, with the consequence of adding a surcharge for longer durations and more performers. Simply, with the above rate, the group performs music and martial arts (*silat*) to accompany the arrival of the groom to unite with the bride in a procession in the morning and music entertainment for guests in the afternoon. For a mak yong group like Satar's, the Malay music and dance group with its eight to twelve performers can set a lower rate. Yet mak yong, with eighteen to twenty performers, cannot apply the same charge. However, Pak Sumadi assumes that their income from the entertainment means nothing to his members (who get paid an average of 50 thousand rupiah) since they have other jobs to make a living. What is important is that their performances help to preserve Malay traditions.



Figure 2.8. A flyer that advertises a mak yong performance by Mak Yong Muda Ledang Balai Tuan Habib, Yayasan Konservatori Seni, 31 March 2019 in Tanjung Pinang. Picture: courtesy of Yayasan Konservatori Seni Tanjung

Satar's rate is not affordable for a typical wedding party or any private celebration. Therefore, Satar relies mostly on the public performances that the local government and media companies may request. The occasions in which the groups perform vary following the government's project and television program. Satar found benefit in marketing his group as performing the "traditional" or "authentic" forms of mak yong while still packaging it as if it was a popular entertainment form.



Figure 2. 9. Mak yong performance by the troupe of Yayasan Konservatori Seni at the performance hall Gedung Aisyah Sulaiman, Tanjung Pinang. Photograph: courtesy of Said Fakhru ar Razi, Tanjung Pinang.

Unlike SMW, YKS from Tanjung Pinang has attempted to package mak yong as popular entertainment. Said Fakhru ar Razi, a young ethnomusicologist who graduated from the Indonesian Institute of Arts (ISI) Yogyakarta, leads the management of the troupe succeeding his father, Said Parman. He commenced an effort in early 2019 to promote mak yong as commercial entertainment. He organised a performance in the Gedung Aisyah Sulaiman city hall in Tanjung Pinang and advertised it through several media, including a short video teaser promoting the performance. This new way of presenting mak yong to the public in the Riau Islands targets a specific age group through its advertisement, requires an entry ticket, and is an indoor performance. With a flyer distributed through social media (Figure 2.8), YKS announced an entry fee of twenty thousand rupiah per person (EUR 1.25; March 2019). However, about a week before the day of the event, YKS cut the ticket price in half, which allowed for more people to afford the entry ticket and increased their sales. On the day of the event, approximately two hundred people attended the performance to watch the indoor mak yong stage performance.

Figure 2.9 shows the performance space with a proscenium stage facing the audience. This style of presentation differs from that of the mak yong stage in a wooden shed on Mantang Island or that of the “traditional” style of an earthen stage with kerosene lamps as YKS’s performance in Daik, Lingga (Figure 2.5). In this way, YKS troupe presented mak yong to reach its target audience, which are youngsters in the urban area of Tanjung Pinang. YKS promoted this performance to the students from the local universities and senior high schools. Like the audience, the performers are also from the same generation. The leader of group realises that mak yong should be packaged as popular entertainment that the youngsters perform and promote through social media to reach a younger generation. In this presentational style with the proscenium stage in a hall, the YKS troupe performed the *Wak Perambun* play. This style minimises interactions as the spatial arrangement positions the performers distant from the audience.



Figure 2.10 The stage at Festival Mak Yong Mantang 2019 in Mantang Island. Photograph: courtesy of Zulpageri (Sanggar Bungsu Sakti, Mantang Island)

In Mantang Island, performers in SBS continued their efforts to present mak yong as folk entertainment for people on the island. They asked for support from the villagers to stage mak yong on several occasions, mostly on Islamic and public holidays, like Islamic new-year and Eid al Adha. The people in the village organised such events and gave financial support for mak yong for entertaining themselves. The school children and youngsters, who are members of the group, did fundraising and collected money from the people in the village. Support also came from the village government to sponsor a mak yong festival in 2018 and 2019, where three of Pak Gani’s troupes of different age ranges from SBS participated.

The above efforts indicate attempts to make mak yong groups professional. However, it is still too early to bring mak yong forward as a folk tradition in Mantang and commercial art form in Kijang and Tanjung Pinang. They try to be professional but depend on commissions from the government, researchers, and television productions. In this context, the mak yong groups in the Riau Islands adjust their performances to the expectations of event organisers but still make use of the label “traditional.” It appears that the reinstatement of mak yong brings the performers into a state of being somewhere between professional and voluntary.

I would argue that traditionalisation, institutionalisation, and authentication have become the most important aspects of mak yong’s revival in the reinstatement of the tradition. This defines the performance structure, plays, dance, music, and other elements, and designates them as a “traditional” form. In this context, the form conceived as “original” or “authentic” has been displayed as one of the identity markers of the Riau Islands. To this point I raise another question: how does it work in daily practices, special events, and its impact on the feeling of being Malay? The next chapter will discuss mak yong performance as equated with the meaning of being Malay and used to reconfigure the Malay cultural realm and to make people Malay.

### Chapter 3

#### Performing Malayness

Wahai tanahku, tanahku Melayu, sungguhlah permai sedari dulu  
 Wahai tanahku, tanahku Melayu, tetaplah masyhur sepanjang waktu  
 Wahai tanahku, tanahku Melayu, terbentang luas darat dan lautan  
 Wahai tanahku, tanahku Melayu, damai berpuak menjadi satu  
 Adat budaya serta bahasa, marwah terjaga sepanjang masa  
 Walaupun jauh badan berada, takkanlah hilang resam di jiwa  
 Wahai tanahku, tanahku Melayu, syair dan pantun sungguhlah merdu  
 Wahai tanahku, tanahku Melayu, engkaulah satu tempatku ber-Ibu  
 Dalam lah hati ku berdoa, kepada Tuhan Yang Maha Kuasa  
 Biarpun jiwa berpisah raga, namun tanahku tetaplah jaya<sup>1</sup>

Medan musician Tengku Ryo Riezqan composed the above lyrics for a song titled “Hymne Tanah Melayu” (“Hymn of the Malay Land”). The inspiration for this composition comes from his observation of the lives of the Malays in Sumatra and Borneo. Tengku Ryo inferred that the misery of the majority of Malays in Indonesia is the result of the degradation of Malay traditional rule, which began during the colonial era and continued until the total destruction of the establishment of the modern state<sup>2</sup> (cf. Tenas Effendy 2013). The Malays, he argued, had lost control over their traditional land, had been pushed aside by newcomers, and so did their culture degenerate. Taking this conclusion, Tengku Ryo wants to stimulate consciousness of the importance of Malay homeland and the sense of identity of Malay communities by the means of Hymne Tanah Melayu.

The “Hymne Tanah Melayu” functions as an anthem that calls for attention to a Malay homeland. This call is reflexive. It provides a space for the subject “I” (“aku”) to express devotion to the Malay homeland. In live performance, this song invites the participants of certain events to perform in a choir, which may bring strong effects to them. In the performance, those who sing the song inhabit the “I.” The repetition of the line “O my homeland, my homeland of the Malay” gives more power to the anthem and multiplies the persuasion to internalise subjectivity and an emotional bond with the Malay land. Melancholic mood dramatises the performance. Also, the anthem provides a frame for the image of the homeland, which shapes a subjective view of the “I” to the homeland to embed meanings to it.

The anthem describes an idealised image of the homeland of Malay culture and presents itself as a form of action, in which those who chant it are acting to convince themselves about the image, its values, and meanings. In stage perfor-

<sup>1</sup> This song is part of Tengku Ryo’s album “Kecik,” which was released in 2008. See the online version of the song: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IXAFdVpwAbw>> last accessed 22 February 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Tengku Ryo, 27 September 2020 (Compare his view to Tenas Effendy’s in “Syair Nasib Melayu” in the Introduction).

mance, the line “O my homeland, my homeland of the Malay, you are magnificent since long ago” may convince the singers themselves about the “lovely” Malay homeland. Music, melody, and gestures in the performance of this song evoke emotion in reciting the lyrics solemnly, in which the performers may persuade themselves to attach feelings to the Malay homeland, which spans across the sea and is well-known (*masyhur*) as the place where many groups of people (*puak*) live peacefully. Then, by singing the line “O my homeland, my homeland of the Malay, you really are my motherland,” the singers may inculcate into themselves an emotional bond with the Malay land as likened to the relationship between a mother and son, living in a cultural realm characterised by customs (*adat*), language (*bahasa*), and rhymed expressions (*syair* and *pantun*). In this sense, singing the “Hymne Tanah Melayu” is the act of inculcating the values—attached to the imagery of a Malay homeland—to the singers acting as the subject “I.” Ultimately, the “I” “takes an oath” of loyalty to the homeland by giving his life for the sake of dignity (*marwah*) of Malay communities, culture, and homeland.

The “Hymne Tanah Melayu” is resonant in the Riau Islands in the current context of cultural revitalisation. Tengku Ryo himself introduced the anthem to the Samudra Ensemble, which performed it at the Festival of Malay Arts and Culture (Festival Gelar Seni Budaya Melayu) in Batam in 2013. Since then, the anthem has been performed at the opening sessions of various cultural events.<sup>3</sup> The anthem inspired the young musicians of Samudra Ensemble to reflect on their identity. Tengku Ryo told me about his conversation with the musicians, who interrogated their Malayness since most of them were born in the Riau Islands from families whose ethnic backgrounds are non-Malay. What is important in this case is the role of performance to provide a frame that invites critical reflection upon Malay identity.

The role of performance in the formation of Malay identity in the Riau Islands goes back to the cultural revitalisation in Riau in the 1980s. The cultural movement instrumentalised music, poetry reading, and performing arts to play roles in evoking the sense of Malay identity (cf. Al Azhar 1997; Derks 1994, 1997). Hence stage performances like poetry readings provide the way for giving commentary on political and social issues over the past few decades (Van der Putten 2011: 231–33). Performance stimulates sensitivity about the social and political context of the rapid industrialisation in the Riau Islands, which reportedly harmed the environment and the lives of the local inhabitants. Poetry reading serves as a way to express anger, sorrow, distress, protest, and provoke audiences to defend Malay dignity. Such a context is reflected upon in a poem written by the Batam-based poet Tarmizi entitled “Surat Rumah Hitam Musim Utara” (“A Letter from the Dark Home in the North Monsoon”).

The poem illustrates a story in the form of a letter that conveys news from a Malay coastal village to a “friend.” The “letter” narrates drastic changes in the

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<sup>3</sup> The anthem is also performed in other parts of the Malay world and by the Malays in the diaspora.



lives of the people and the natural environment. Describing the village's surroundings, the "letter" reports about changes triggered by the establishment of an iron bridge and a modern building that destroyed mangrove forests. Industrialisation pushed urbanisation and brought with it a more modern way of life and entertainment forms. It also brought an urban lifestyle complete with criminality, prostitution, and other vices that could be found in urban areas like Batam and Tanjung Pinang. All the progress drove the local Malays aside and left them watching the environmental impact of this development. In a melancholic mood, the "letter" says to the "friend:"

Yesterday, you asked me about the tides  
 We caught prawns together  
 Now the mangroves have been cleared and the prawns are gone  
 It has become a field of desires, of uncontrolled lust  
 All that's left for us is to sing *dondang sayang*, oh...  
 Yesterday, you asked me about the sound of *ghazal* music  
 Now it's been forgotten, replaced by the poundings of disco music  
 They dance and move up and down  
 But we are stuck with the stigma of this rancid prostitute, oh...  
 Yesterday, you asked me about the spirit of Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat  
 Now what is left is greedy and sycophant souls  
 Comrade, you know the wind blows forcefully in the north monsoon  
 Madness that storms me in the mourning of the old jetty of our house, oh...<sup>4</sup>

People in the Riau Islands should be rather familiar with such a depiction, which refers to the development of the industrial estates and urban areas such as those in northern Bintan Island, Tanjung Pinang, and Batam. The industrial estates have attracted job seekers from across Indonesia over the past four decades to migrate to the region. The industrial zones of Batam and Bintan popularly became associated with the stigmas of being immoral places due to the prostitutes, bars, discotheques, and drugs (cf. Lindquist 2004, 2005, 2010). In this context, poems convey critical commentaries, enhance the resistance against the impact of industrialisation, and call for restoring Malay dignity. Cultural workers drive cultural revitalisation to revive Malay traditional culture, celebrate identity, and reconstruct a Malay cultural realm with its moral standard and values. Efforts in the movement manifest themselves in the promotion of Malay traditional arts, such as dance, music, drama, and verbal arts.

This cultural revitalisation is a form of resistance against the process that integrates the Riau Islands into a globalised world. Transnational companies, financial investments, and a high influx of migrants have incorporated the islands

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<sup>4</sup> This translation is based on Tarmizi's stage performance in September 2018 in Batam. For the published version of this poem, see Tarmizi (2021: 61–62). "hari lalu, kau sempat bertanya tentang air surut dan pasang; kita sama-sama menangkap udang; kini bakaunya telah ditebang dan udang kita hilang; hutan bakau itu telah menjadi ladang birahi, dari nafsu-nafsu liar tak terhalang; kita hanya sebagian melantunkan *dondang sayang*, oh; hari lalu, kau sempat bertanya tentang *rempak ghazal*; kini telah tertinggal, berganti hentakan music disco; triping hingga menungging; pun kita masih sebagian nama lendir dan anyir, oh; hari lalu, kau sempat bertanya; tentang semangat Hang Tuah dan Hang Jebat; kini yang tersisa jiwa-jiwa melarat dan penjilat; saudaraku, kau tau musim utara badai menggila; gilaku, pada duka pelantar tua rumah kita, oh."

into the modern global economy. In the industrial zones and urban areas, groups of people would come and go as tourists, workers, job seekers, and other types of transient groups that constituted one of the features of the world shaped by the movement of people or ethnoscape (Appadurai 1996: 33). However, this mobility and migrations do not necessarily disintegrate the resident local communities bonded by the networks of kinship, friendship, and place of residence. In response, the local communities strengthened their identity, made sense of their place, and restored their relationship to cultural heritage through narratives and stage performances. Arjun Appadurai conceptualised such attempts as the act of “producing locality” to “inscribe” the sense of “locality” into a substantive form of social group called a “neighborhood” (Appadurai 1996: 179, 183). Related to this, I focus this chapter on the role of stage performance in the production of locality.

“Producing locality” and realising “neighborhood” materialise in continuous attempts of (re)embedding traditional culture. I call these efforts “Malayisation” or *memelayukan*. Al Azhar (1997: 769) showed such endeavours taking place in Pekanbaru in the 1980s, which aimed to oppose the domination of performing arts mostly developed from Minangkabau martial arts (*silek*) and the drama *randai*. He names these efforts as “Malayisation” of performing arts in Riau in the context of the rise of consciousness of being Malay. In 1920s and 1930s Malaya, “Malayisation” of performing art occurred in the case of bangsawan theatre. In this formative period of Malay nationalism, a circle of educated Malays criticised the theatre form as adopting artistic elements from the Western traditions. In response, bangsawan performers reshaped the repertoire of bangsawan developed from Malay tales and incorporated with songs and dances, in which Malay kings and princes were made into the characters of legendary heroes. These were running as gradual phases of “Malayisation” of bangsawan (Tan 1989: 252–53; cf. Putten 2014: 284). In this chapter, I employ the concept of “Malayisation” as the processes of recreating the Malay cultural realm through stage performance, sound, and iconic representation.

How do stage performances play roles in “Malayisation” in the current context of the Riau Islands? In what ways do the performances contribute to the reconstruction of the Malay cultural realm, restore the connection between the local communities and place, and produce “locality” and local subject? This chapter focuses on the role of stage performance, particularly mak yong theatre performance and sound, in the processes of reconstructing the cultural realm, producing “locality,” and realising a “neighbourhood.” More specifically, the role of mak yong that this chapter pays attention to is through live performances and its effects on art production, such as music and dance. I pay particular attention to the performance of mak yong at cultural festivals and its roles in enhancing art production in the way that young artists have appropriated some of its elements to compose songs and dances, which multiply the effects of mak yong performances. Additionally, I consider the contribution of mak yong in representing place as an artistic icon of a village, a district, and province, as well as in shaping the sonic



environment in the Riau Islands. This chapter departs from the importance of performance from the viewpoint of performers and audiences and contextualises it in the current process of identity formation.

### **The power of performance**

During my field research in the Riau Islands, I found a number of festivals held by the local government and cultural workers. They staged various performance genres regarded as traditional, such as verbal arts, poems, music, dance, martial arts, theatre, and rituals. For example, audience and performers participated in parades in order to commemorate historical events and exhibit local cultures. Cultural festivals often take place at historical sites to celebrate and popularise them and for social recognition. The festivals provide the people occasions to experience culture in aesthetic and ritualistic forms, to make sense of place, and experience social contact. According to Milton Singer, these kinds of performances are composed of “cultural media,” linguistic and nonlinguistic—such as song, poetry, dance, drama—which are combined in many ways to communicate the content of culture considered as central to the bearers of the traditions, called “cultural performances.” (Singer 1972: 71, 1995: 27). This concept emphasises that cultural performances serve as cultural media. Practically, in the Riau Islands, groups of artists employ such media for certain purposes at evoking consciousness of being or becoming Malay.

The Joget Dangkong Melayu Serumpun Bersatu group of artists from Kampung Mengkurus (on the east coast of Bintan Island) started their business in Malay music and dance in 2011. The group performs by commission to perform either in private or at public events. At a wedding party, dancers and musicians perform to accompany the procession of the bride and groom to sit at the bridal dais, and then, continue to entertain guests afterwards. Cultural festival organisers also invite this group to perform. At these events, the performers seek audience participation by bringing them up on stage in a kind of social dance known as joget dangkong. Pak Sumadi, the group’s leader, told me about his ultimate goal of founding the group and promoting joget dangkong. He stated that their efforts aimed to revive Malay dance and music even though they do not earn enough money or gain other economic benefits. Their main concern is to reassert Bintan and Riau Islands as the land of Malay culture by promoting Malay performing arts and ultimately to make people absorbing some aspects of Malay traditions.<sup>5</sup>

The activities of the performers of Pak Sumadi’s group cannot earn much income as they set a comparatively low rate for performances. This can be as inexpensive as ordering a karaoke machine with a few singers and electronic keyboard (see p. 85). This karaoke form of entertainment has become standard for private wedding parties. For more or less the same price, Pak Sumadi competes with the so-called “organ tunggal” entertainment. The group earns only a little

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<sup>5</sup> Interview with Pak Sumadi and some of members of the group Joget Dangkong Melayu Serumpun Bersatu, in Kampung Mengkurus, Desa Teluk Bakau, 10 October 2017.

money from wedding parties or cultural festivals held by local governments. Most of his members have their own occupations to earn a living. Pak Sumadi himself perceives his attempts as a call to revive the Malay dance that his parents had developed in the 1940s. His father was a soldier from Java who came to the Riau Islands and met his mother, a local Malay dancer. They got married and established a dance group of joget dangkong that lasted for a few decades. For Pak Sumadi, reviving the dance practices has a connection with personal aspects of his life. At the time of my interview, most of the group's members were not ethnic Malay, but they are engaged in Malay art production. This is meant to (re)embed the art practices with the people in the Riau Islands through cultural performance.

Such a transformation driven by performance implies its capability. It is not merely to entertain, but more seriously to push cultural change, develop community, and mark or change identity (Schechner 2002: 46). In the social and cultural contexts of diverse ethnic composition in the Riau Islands, stage performances encourage the Malay language with its local register, literature, performing arts, wedding ceremonies, and practices alike to become dominant among other ethnic cultures. In this context, the performance does not reflect but veil, distort, and direct cultural configuration. It serves as an active agent of change. Victor Turner argues that performance could actively work in such social and cultural changes, as they are

not simple reflectors or expressions of culture or even of changing culture but may themselves be active agencies of change, representing 'the eye' by which culture sees itself and 'the drawing board' on which creative actors sketch out what they believe to be more apt or interesting design for living (Turner 1987: 24).

In the above passage, Turner emphasises that the relationship between performance and audience is not unidirectional, but rather reciprocal or dialogic and reflexive. When most of the so-called Malay traditions have been left behind, stage performances glorify them. The performances provide a display window and invite a critical view to see into the traditions themselves, often in poetic, aesthetic, ritualistic, and playful ways. Through such a reflexive performance, the audience reminds themselves about something that they have ignored in their lives and to which they may be enticed to return their attention. At this point, performance does not only reflect society or expresses the configuration of culture, but frequently it occurs as a critique to direct and/or to cover a certain feature of social life (Turner 1987: 22). In the Riau Islands, where the Malays form a quarter of the total population, cultural activists and performers employ the power of performance to (re)embed Malay traditions and persuade the other people to make the traditions their own, to "become" Malay.

Several previous attempts of propagating identity through art performance illustrate the power of performance that drives cultural change. The Suku Petalangan on the Kampar River, who are impacted by massive deforestation in Riau mainland, defended their survival through performing arts to celebrate identity and transmit traditional cultures. These are closely linked to the concepts

and practices of communal ownership and the utilisation of land (Turner 1997: 648, 669). The former Mayor of Batam, Nyat Kadir (2001–2004), instructed governmental agencies, school, and other public institutions to play Malay music as background sounds in public spaces during working hours. The implementation of this instruction led to a certain ambience in the sonic environment that the listening public could experience and may attach certain feelings to. Will Derks pointed out the role of music in stimulating the sense of identity. In 1994 in the city centre of Pekanbaru, a set of loudspeakers was installed on a traffic light at a zebra crossing, which played the popular Malay song “Lancang Kuning” when the traffic light turned red. The music here is deployed to promote a certain aspect of Malay tradition and of Malay identity (Derks 1997: 705).

Aswandi Syahri, a local historian in Tanjung Pinang, recorded an event in 1999 in Daik, Lingga, at which the Riau poet Sutardji Calzoum Bahri recited poems and delivered a speech to inaugurate the launch of Junewal Mukhtar’s collection of poems. In his speech at the occasion, Sutardji introduced a nickname, *negeri kata-kata*, or the “country of words” to refer to the Riau Islands in order to celebrate the literary tradition in the region as ascribed to the nineteenth-century Riau-Lingga Sultanate (Aswandi Syahri 2003: 10). This phrase was subsequently used by many poets in the region in the late 1990s and early 2000s. In this regard, it was Sutardji’s performance that coined the metaphor and brought it to life. When I visited the Riau Islands for this research, this nickname was still imbued to the region and so inspired me to adopt it as the title of this thesis.

The above cases indicate that performances and sounds are thought to stimulate effects and responses from audiences. A study on Malay writings that contain description of stage performance can help illustrate the significance of the performance within communities. Tracing the tradition of recitation from the nineteenth-century texts written and copied in Riau Islands, Jenny McCallum examined fictional stories that contained an aesthetic evaluation of sounds, their social meanings, and responses (McCallum 2017: 94–95). McCallum looked at the vocality of the texts and showed the effects of performances of Malay syair on the listeners. Several terms reflect the emotional feelings of the audience as they responded to the recitation, such as *bimbang* (anxiety) and *pilu* (melancholy), which can be interpreted as amplified real-life responses to the recitation of the syair. In this regard, melodious voice was used to affect the audience in various ways: “intentionally and unintentionally, across gender differences, for good and evil, and by virtuous characters to devious ends” (McCallum 2017: 106–9). In the Malay court tradition, thunder-like sounds of the drum of the nobat royal ensemble triggered amazement from the listeners (McCallum 2019: 108), summoned supernatural energy connecting to the community’s origins, and created acoustic boundaries of a community sharing the same allegiance to the same authority (Andaya 2011: 23–24), as well as played a role in identity formation with the relationship among three aspects: holiness, power, and sound (Raja Iskandar 2017: 82).

As with these previous studies that discuss the role of sound in the Malay world, I take into account the sonic environment in the mid-nineteenth century Riau Islands. I look at the ways mak yong affected its audiences by tracing what *Syair Perkawinan Kapitan Tik Sing* illustrates (cf. pp 7–8). The syair records that in Tik Sing's wedding party, his father the Chinese captain promised to his honoured guest, the caretaker of the royal regalia of Riau-Lingga Engku Putri Raja Hamidah, to visit her three days after the reception in Tanjung Pinang together with the newlyweds. The syair recounts that the captain and Engku Putri had a close relationship as if like a mother and son, implying a patron-client relationship. Returning to the palace on Penyengat, Engku Putri summoned Malay chiefs, local leaders, and people to organise a party, prepare food, snacks (*juadah*), decorate the venue, and set up for the entertainment. When Tik Sing's family and their company arrive at the shore of Penyengat, the atmosphere was festive,

All the sounds are so alluring	like the voice of the aeolian harp
Those who hear it feel so melancholy	like a dagger straight to their hearts <sup>6</sup>
After finishing the meal	she requests to play music
Mak yong dancing in the square	before the crowd-filled terrace <sup>7</sup>

(Menick 1988: 61, 72)

The above stanzas indicate that the writer attempts to portray the atmosphere created by the melodious sounds. The aeolian harp (*buluh perindu*) represents the stereotypical description of melodic sound that affects the listeners. The writer also uses the term melancholy (*pilu*) to describe to the readers about the strong effect of the performance to the audience. The author of the syair illustrates that those who hear the melodious sound feel like a bamboo knife slicing their hearts. In the following stanzas, the author shifts to the mak yong performance and response from the audience, including Tik Sing's father.

As soon as he sits, he asks to go out	and goes down to the terrace
Watching mak yong dancing in a row	the captain sees it as so ravishing <sup>8</sup>
Mak yong dances while stepping	accompanied by music as well
People rush eagerly to see it	both men and women <sup>9</sup>

(Menick 1988: 74, 78)

This mak yong stage performance provides an indication on the ability of the art form to affect its audience in the mid-nineteenth century. It can be a vantage point to view the work of mak yong performance and sound. McCallum argued that the contemporary literary production stimulated by the colonial interest in Malay

<sup>6</sup> Segala bunyian terlalu merdu; seperti bunyi buluh perindu; Sekaliannya mendengar rasanya pilu; bagai dihiris dengan sembilu.

<sup>7</sup> Setelah sudah berjamu-jamuan; disuruhnya palu bunyi-bunyian; Makyong menari di alun-alun; di hadapan selasar beramai-ramaian.

<sup>8</sup> Seketika duduk bermohon keluar; serta berjalan turun ke selasar; Melihat makyong menari berbanjar; kapitan melihat terlalu gemar.

<sup>9</sup> Makyung menari sambil berjalan; serta dengan bunyi-bunyian; Orang melihat berlari-larian; ada laki-laki ada perempuan.

writings did not destroy the oral and aural practices, but rather resulted in a split of trajectories between literary and oral traditions (McCallum 2017: 111). In the current context, the reemergence of performing traditions, including mak yong theatre, has contributed to the enhancement of aural consumption. Mak yong becomes active in art production and has been staged in the cultural events to take part in the recreation of the Malay cultural realm and sonic environment. Moreover, the revived mak yong has been assigned meanings as “authentic” theatrical performance and sound from the past.

### **Mak yong’s performance and sound**

Practitioners of mak yong realise that the most important aspects of the art form are sound and performance: voice, music, and acting. Although stories are important, they have to manifest in an embodied performance. Because of the typical 30-minute time restrictions for performances at most of art and cultural festivals, stories are rarely performed in their entirety (Chapter 4). Mak yong’s repertoire only consists of five stories left in the tradition in the Riau Islands.<sup>10</sup> The audience will find these stories performed at cultural festivals. Nevertheless, as a performer in Tanjung Pinang told me, “what they favour is its spectacle, its attractions on stage.”<sup>11</sup> This is what the audiences mainly seek in the performance so they will not get bored to watch the same plays repeatedly at the different events. This view encouraged me to look further at the actions and responses during the actual moment of performance (see Chapter 5 for a more detailed description).

Stage performance plays a key role to drive the plot. In my conversations with performers during my visits, most of them admitted that they do not memorise any particular dialogue. However, stage performance stimulates them to compose dialogue or recall other details of the play, so the plot moves according to the storyline. In an interview with senior performer Pak Atan, who is always acting the character of the male royal attendant, Awang Pengasuh, I asked him to tell a story or give a few lines uttered by the character he often performs. However, he did not memorise much and said that on stage he would remember it all.<sup>12</sup> As I watched and recorded his performances at several events, his statement is confirmed. Additionally, the performers use certain formulaic phrases that can help making dialogue and in performance.

Performers utter lines in dialogue with certain comical gestures or slapstick humour. They speak in the local dialect of the Malay language, which was considered backward. Jokes are part of the comical acting. Meanwhile, the local Malay language register sounds expressive and is reflected in mak yong performance. The performance invites the audience to see the style in the dramatic play as unique. The promotion of such a distinctive style of Malay spoken language

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<sup>10</sup> See the Introduction for a brief summary of the five mak yong stories, and Chapter 4 for the analysis of the stories.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Syafaruddin, 24 March 2017 in Tanjung Pinang.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Pak Atan, 4 November 2017 in Sungai Enam.

in an elevated occasion of a cultural festival evokes the audience to celebrate the epitome of local Malay language. The performance turns the “backwardness” to become an “authentic” aspect of Malay culture. Regarding this promotion of the local spoken style of Malay, the performers of mak yong also pay attention to the aspects of the language’s accent and creating melodical sounds that they accentuate for added effect.

Pak Gani emphasized the importance of melismatic elaboration and decorative notes in singing mak yong songs. On some occasions after rehearsals, he reviewed the training process and the technical competency of the young performers when singing the songs in an upbeat tempo. Faster speeds lead to difficulty in producing a twisted melody (*cengkok*). He mentioned that *cengkok* and rhythm (*irama*) are an important and integral part of the songs that the performers have to elaborate upon and while feeling it. Their significance is to stimulate enchantment and attract the audience. Some of my interlocutors recounted their experiences in hearing the stylised sound of mak yong songs during a performance and found it to be fascinating. Personally, I was stunned listening to a mak yong video recording, in which Pak Gani sang a song titled “Timang Weloi.”<sup>13</sup> I found it melodious and listened to it repeatedly. Some elderly and middle-aged people in Mantang Island, Kijang, and Tanjung Pinang, who frequently watched mak yong performances, noticed that the songs and music were enchanting and believed that the sounds were possessed by spirits (*berisi*). These individuals talked about their experience and admitted to finding the sounds to be appealing. They insisted that anyone who had heard the music would not be able to resist attending a mak yong performance.

In mak yong stage performances, the audience interacts with the performers, comments on it, and laughs. The performers invite the audience to be involved in the play through jokes and dialogue. For example, actors ask simple questions to the audience to get a response and by mentioning the word “audience” in their dialogue to show that they are aware they are being watched. Clown characters play an important role in entertaining the audience. One example of this is the female royal attendant, Inang Pengasuh, in the story *Raja Bungsu Sakti*, which was performed at the Festival Tamadun Melayu in Daik in November 2017 (see Chapter 5, episode 4). Prince Raja Bungsu Sakti’s mother, Queen Jerak Jentara, asks her attendant, Inang Pengasuh, to bring her two heirlooms that were inherited from Raja Gondang. However, Inang Pengasuh forgets where she kept

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<sup>13</sup> Timang Weloi is a song that is sung by the clown figure Awang Pengasuh when returning to the royal palace.

Jala—n, jalan masu—k timang welo—i sayang, jalan masuk dagang cik seora—ng, timang welo—o we—e la—i.

Chorus: Awe—e jalan masu—k timang welo—i sayang, jalan masuk dagang cik seora—ng, timang welo—i we—e la—i.

Awe—e sinilah tempa—t, timang welo—i sayang, sinilah tempat kira bicara—a, timang welo—i we—e la—i.

Chorus: Awe—e sinilah tempa—t, timang welo—i sayang, sinilah tempat kira bicara—a, timang welo—i we—e la—i.

the two magical objects. She becomes confused and asks the audience whether they know where the objects are. Because of this, Inang Pengasuh invites audience participation, usually in the form of laughter and shouts. This method also occurs in other performances, such as at the Festival Bahari Kepri on 15 October 2017 in Tanjung Pinang with the story *Wak Perambun*. In the play, the hunter Wak Perambun is ordered by Raja Perak Siton to look for a deer in the jungle. Tired from his journey in the forest, Wak Perambun takes a rest. When he gets hungry and thirsty, Wak Perambun shoots two magical arrows into the sky and the earth, from which food and drink appears. The hunter enjoys his meal and asks the audience if anyone wants to join him. The transcriptions of the above parts of the respective performances can be seen in the following quote.

INANG PENGASUH: Where did I put them (the magic sarong and stick)? Audience, have you seen them? Ah, this is the heirloom, you lied. Mak Senik, here's the heirloom. The audience lied. They said they didn't know, even though they did.<sup>14</sup>

WAK PERAMBUN: This is delicious! Hey audience, do you want to taste it? If so, come up onto the stage! Ah, I'm so hungry. I'll just finish it.<sup>15</sup>

Live performances are dynamic. The audience conveys their response to the performers in the form of comments, shouts, laughter, and applause. This communication indicates an engagement between the audience and performers. Such an interaction occurs in live performance, although its intensity depends on the type of stage on which mak yong is performed.



Figure 3. 1 The performance of the troupe Mak Yong Warisan on the proscenium stage at Festival Teater Bintan, in Kijang, 27 August 2017. Photograph by Alan Darmawan.

<sup>14</sup> Translated from the transcription: “Mane Inang simpan ini ha? Penonton ade jumpe tak? Aa ini die ha, bohong. Mak Senik, ini ha, penonton bohong. Kate die tak ade, padahal ade” (the performance of Raja Bungsu Sakti at the Festival Tamadun Melayu in November 2017 in Daik, Lingga, by the troupe of Mak Yong Muda Yayasan Konservatori Seni Tanjung Pinang).

<sup>15</sup> My translation from the transcription: “Sedap oi! Oi penonton, endak? Endak sini lah naik! Ah lapa(r) betul lah. Aku abiskan je ye!” (Wak Perambun performed at the Festival Bahari Kepri on 15 October 2017 in Tanjung Pinang, by the troupe of Yayasan Konservatori Seni Tanjung Pinang).

The proscenium stage is raised several feet off the ground, and the audience watch the performance only from the front-side. This type of stage, which is preferred by festival organizers, separates the audience a bit from the performers. Along with the lighting, a set of loudspeakers amplifies the sounds of the music and dialogue. The audience can see and hear the performers on the stage. Regardless of the addition of sound and lighting, the setting of the proscenium stage cannot allow the audience to interact at a close distance with the performers and can only communicate from the front-side (Figure 3.1; see pp. 86–87, Figures 2.9 and 2.10). On this type of stage, the performance is less dynamic than on the stage set on the ground.

Unlike the proscenium stage, the arena stage built in the form of a wooden shed, as was erected in Mantang Island for any event, is visible from three different directions. Audiences can move from one side to the other and watch from a closer distance from the front, right, and left sides of the stage. This kind of stage with its spatial arrangement allows performers and audiences to interact more intimately (Figure 3.2). It is similar with the arena stage set up in Daik, Lingga, at the Festival Tamadun Melayu in November 2017, which was positioned close to the seats of audience and was not obstructed by wooden construction beams (Figure 3.3). I was amazed by the interaction during that performance, in which the acting and responses occurred intensely and stimulated each other. During the performance, I witnessed a chain of playful acting and enthusiastic responses that followed immediately one after another in a hilarious performance, which was full of laughter and comments upon the performers' acting (see the philological edition in Chapter 5).



Figure 3. 2 The arena stage with wooden construction beams on Mantang Island. The performance was held on 22 September 2018, photograph by Alan Darmawan.

In order to contextualise the mak yong performances, I look at the response and enthusiasm from audiences that emerge at cultural festivals and view it as part of efforts in constructing the performance space. In this respect, the organisers of



the events, performers, and audiences set up the cultural festivals to celebrate heritage (place, objects, and practices) that had been left behind. The process of performance, in this sense, is part of the continuum of changing society that is shaping identity and promoting traditional culture, which is considered as a treasure (*khazanah*) of Malay culture from the past. In either local or international-branded cultural festivals, audiences attend to watch or participate in art performance, exhibitions, games, and other spectacles. Such festivals celebrate the local collective identity of Malays, place, and cultural heritage, which is believed to be inherited from the ancestors. A master of ceremonies plays a big role in cheering up the audience to arouse enthusiasm and create a lively atmosphere for the performance.

Festival Sungai Enam is one of the local cultural festivals held in a village situated on the south coast of Bintan Island in 2017. It celebrates heritage in the forms of traditional performing arts, games, and cooking. People and art performers from southern part of Bintan Island and the islands situated south off Bintan, Tanjung Pinang, and district head and high-ranking bureaucrats of Bintan attended Festival Sungai Enam. In this festival, a group of young performers—students from junior-high-school (SMP 23 of Mantang) and other teenagers from Kijang town—performed mak yong. Mustafa Abbas, a local cultural activist in Bintan, acted as the master of ceremonies. He praised Apri Sujadi, the district head of Bintan, and talked about mak yong to encourage the audience to be pay attention and be proud of Malay heritage. On the stage, he spoke eloquently:

Thank God, the audience is abundant tonight in Kampung Sungai Enam Laut, the Village of Sungai Enam. This is the land of Malay culture, the culinary centre of otak-otak, which we all have promoted. The Bupati of Bintan pays much attention to developing tourism, promoting local cooking and traditional culture. So we should develop the cultural heritage of our ancestors and take it to a global stage. And we announce to everyone that Mak Yong Warisan has performed in many countries, not only in Indonesia, but also in the Netherlands, in Australia, and hopefully if there is no change, this December they will perform in Korea.<sup>16</sup>

Mustafa's speech is quite encouraging. Despite some errors—such as the fact that some of the senior performers of the mak yong troupe performed in Naples, Italy (not in the Netherlands) and failed to perform at the UNESCO intergovernmental meeting in South Korea in 2017—his introduction to the mak yong performance was aimed at exciting the audience at the culmination of the day-long festival. Taking place from morning till midnight, the festival exhibited

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<sup>16</sup> Translated from the original speech: “alhamdulillah tumpah ruah hari ini di Kampung Sungai Enam Laut kelurahan sungai enam, ya ini merupakan kampung berbudaya, pusat kuliner otak-otak, yang digagas langsung oleh kita semua. Bapak Bupati Bintan sangat konsen, untuk mengembangkan pariwisata, kuliner, dan tradisi, yang merupakan warisan nenek moyang kite, yang harus dikembangkan sebagai kebudayaan yang tentunya nanti boleh mendunia. Dan kami maklumkan kepada kite semua, sanggar Mak Yong Warisan ini mereka sudah tampil di banyak negare, bukan saje di Indonesie, mereka pernah tampil di Belande, pernah tampil di Australi, dan insyaallah nanti kalau tidak ada perubahan, bulan Desember mereka akan tampil di Korea.” (Festival Sungai Enam, 04 November 2017).

Malay local cooking, a boat race, a boat parade, a spinning-top (*gasing*) match, and presented dangdut popular music and a mak yong theatre performance. The festival itself was intended to promote Sungai Enam Village as the land of Malay local culture of Bintan, the shrimp snack *otak-otak*, and Malay heritage and identity.

The organisers have framed Festival Sungai Enam as an exhibition of the most celebrated Malay traditional culture consisting of several cultural elements from the past, which have been selected as cultural heritage. The event, the frame, and purposes themselves are contemporary, which reflect the community's new construct of identity, their pride, and expectations for recognition and economic benefit from the tourist visits. In this sense, the organisation of the festival, the exhibition and performances are what Victor Turner calls a mirror, which does not merely reflect the social system, but reflect the consciousness and the product of the consciousness (Turner 1987: 22). In this regard, it is the consciousness of being Malay and the projection of Malayness on stage. The narratives that create the sense of locality in a geographic and historical context make such a local festival different from the cultural festivals held by the communities in the rest of the Malay World. In the festivals in Bintan, a slogan that the master of ceremonies always repeats to advise audiences to take care of Malay traditions indicates the efforts of forging such a consciousness. This slogan—*kalau bukan kite siapa lagi, kalau bukan sekarang bile lagi?* (“if we don’t do it, who will? if not now, then when?”)—illustrates an effort to raise consciousness and stimulate attention to Malay traditions in a continuum of social and cultural changes.



Figure 3.3 The performance of Mak Yong Muda of Yayasan Konservatori Seni from Tanjung Pinang on the earthen stage at Festival Tamadun Melayu in Lingga. See also Figures 5.1 and 5.2. Photograph by Alan Darmawan.

Exhibitions and stage performances reflect the efforts to draw attention to Malay traditional culture as it is displayed and promoted in a certain way. Several cultural festivals, such as Festival Bahari Kepri centered in Tanjung Pinang and

Festival Tamadun Melayu in Daik, exhibit various cultural performances ranging from exhibitions (local crafts, local cooking), parades (boat parade and a carnival of Malay traditional dress), up to stage performances (traditional practices, ritual, performing arts). These forms of cultural performances have become media to convey the same message of being conscious of owning cultural heritage and of being Malay. However, the same message is conveyed by various media, in which each media contributes its own generic message, which results in “subtly variant messages, like a hall of mirrors” (Turner 1987: 23–24). In this sense, I consider mak yong theatre that contributes its generic message to the enhancement of consciousness and the recreation of a cultural sphere and soundscape.

### **Reconstructing cultural realm and soundscape**

The organisers of cultural festivals usually stage their events at heritage sites to connect them to the sites. They make use the stage performances in such events to commemorate historical events, revive Malay World narratives, and make sense of heritage sites and objects. The festivals perform several aesthetic, ritualistic, and traditional practices in the form of stage acts, exhibitions, parades, and other spectacles. Music and recitation of syair and the Malay aphoristic poem “Gurindam Duabelas” build a certain ambience that the audience experiences aurally as part of the Malay soundscape. These performances reconstruct the world of the Malay through symbolic reality, narratives (either tales or history), and sounds.

The literary and art festival Festival Sastra Internasional Gunung Bintan took place in 2018 and 2019<sup>17</sup> around Mount Bintan to revive the spirit of Hang Tuah through the recitation of a hundred poems by poets across generations. The festival objective was to help people take inspiration from the Malay hero and ensure the heroic spirit is still alive. Poets reinterpret the figure of Hang Tuah, reshape it, and internalise it through public poetry readings. At Festival Sungai Carang,<sup>18</sup> a boat race was organised on the Carang Creek to celebrate the site of the former royal settlement of the Riau-Johor Sultanate (*Situs Kota Lama* or *Kota Rebah*). Another riverine event at the festival was the boat parade. Dozens of boats in various sizes paraded from the upstream of the creek to the estuary and on into the narrow strait between the coastline of Tanjung Pinang and Penyengat Island. The boats carried the names of Malay nobles of the Riau-Lingga Sultanate. When they were passing through the strait, a master of ceremony read out a brief life history of the nobles. In the evening until midnight, performers took the stage for poetry readings, music performances, dancing, and theatrical productions to show Malay intangible heritage in order to amplify the story of the Riau-Lingga Sultanate. Mak yong was performed at this festival and presented the virtual reality

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<sup>17</sup> This festival continued in 2020 through an online video platform because of the Covid-19 pandemic, where poets in the Riau Islands pre-recorded their performances and uploaded them to the Internet.

<sup>18</sup> Festival Sungai Carang has become an annual event since it was first initiated in 2014 by senior poet and cultural activist Rida K. Liamsi.

of the royal family's life. The performance of mak yong also showed the tradition itself as one of the art forms whose development the royal court of Penyengat had supported from the mid-nineteenth century onwards.

The Festival Tamadun Melayu, held in November 2017 in Lingga, glorified the Sultan of Riau-Lingga-Johor-Pahang, Mahmud Ri'ayat Syah (r. 1761–1812) and celebrated his official status as an Indonesian national hero. This festival was aimed to exalt the hero and consecrate Lingga as the former place of the royal seat, which moved from the upstream of Carang Creek on Bintan Island in the late eighteenth century. A number of texts on posters, the newly made portrait of the sultan, and a bangsawan theatre performance had been used to convey the life story of the sultan. Sri Mahkota Lingga, a renown troupe of bangsawan theatre from Daik, performed the story about the move of Sultan Mahmud to the new site of his sultanate in Lingga to avoid a counterattack from the Dutch and to establish a new military base. Unlike bangsawan that plays a more historical narrative, mak yong presents tales of the mythical kingdoms as a symbolic reality that promotes the idea of king and prince as legendary heroes.

What is the significance of the encouragement of the Malay heroes, of giving respect to the royal family and the former king, and the celebration of historical sites? They justify the reconstruction of a cultural realm and its manifestation in physical space, the Malay land (*Tanah Melayu*), which is conceived as the former territory under the rule of a king. In the attempts to create a Malay cultural realm, the idea of kingship defines and legitimates the Malay land on which traditions and customs were practiced. If the Malay king and royal family are enshrined in bangsawan with their royal etiquette, mak yong popularises the idea of kingship in a playful way. It presents comical acting with slapstick humour and jokes, in which the clown figure mocks the king. Mak yong brings with it distinctive forms of motives, stories, words, phrases, and music considered to have survived from a distant past and conceived as “archaic” and “authentic” (see pp. 33–35). This uniqueness of mak yong's medium contribute to the reconstruction of cultural realm—the narrative world and sonic environment, either by live performance or recording.

Sound plays an important role to create space for social interaction and in the formation of identity (Stokes 1994: 5–6). With the improvement of technology in recording, it is important to take into consideration the sounded world and its role in social and cultural change (Samuels et al. 2010). An example of the role of music is that, in the Riau Islands, most musicians compose their works based on traditional performing, especially elaborating mostly zapin melodies. Hence Malay music contribute to shaping the soundscape in the region. It is not to ignore other forms of music developed by other ethnic groups such as Javanese, Sundanese, Chinese, Batak, and Minang that are audible especially in the urban area such as Batam and Tanjung Pinang, for instance, but identity politics driven by the local authorities have given support to Malay art production. The governments organised Malay cultural festivals and distributed grants allocated in the local budget (see pp.

75–77). In the case of mak yong, the art form contributes to create the atmosphere of cultural event, which people experience. Besides zapin that became one of the sources of music production, the music of mak yong has been used as another source of current music production.

A handful of musicians produced new works based on mak yong music and songs. Adi Supriyadi bin Hasanin,<sup>19</sup> whose stage name is Adi Linkepin, recomposed mak yong's prelude songs using violin and electronic keyboard to produce melody and rhythm.<sup>20</sup> This work gained appreciation from the public and stimulated him to develop further the instrumental music work with his music group, Samudra Ensemble. The music band Samudra Ensemble rearranged mak yong songs into a new work and combined traditional music instruments of Malay, acoustic, and electric instruments in the arrangement. Samudra Ensemble's version of mak yong prelude songs and music incorporates the original melody with the pop-rock style, titled "Progressive Mak Yong." The band performs this song at festivals and made a music video to upload on YouTube.<sup>21</sup>

Progressive Mak Yong rises in popularity, subsequently, and so does the music band Samudra Ensemble. The song became the most popular among a dozen songs composed from traditional music and songs by this music band. In December 2017, Samudra Ensemble launched its first album titled "Sedayoung Kepri" which included Progressive Mak Yong.<sup>22</sup> Now the single Progressive Mak Yong is not only played from the internet but also in an audio CD album produced and distributed locally. Recently, some local choreographers who trained school children in some schools in Bintan, adopted the song as musical accompaniment to their dance works. These young local artists, in art production, appropriated mak yong dances to create new works of dance. Attending an art festival of school children of Bintan in Kijang town in December 2017, I watched and recorded the performances of the dance works, which were performed by several groups of students.<sup>23</sup> Some other works of dance composed from mak yong's dance movements have been uploaded on YouTube.<sup>24</sup>

Interestingly, the music production based on mak yong has attracted the attention of Kijang-based senior musician Suhardi, who goes by the stage name Pak Ngah. He arranged his own version of mak yong prelude songs "Betabek" with electronic keyboard and gave a new title to it, "Tabek" ("to respect"). The music

<sup>19</sup> For further information about Adi Supriyadi, see Benjamin (2019: 287–89).

<sup>20</sup> Listen to "Progressive Mak Yong" by Adi Lingkepin playing violin for melody. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DEZsi9ri0ZA>> accessed in 17 November 2020.

<sup>21</sup> See the video of "Progressive Mak Yong" by the music band from Tanjung Pinang Samudra Ensemble <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KoGIs-MKisU>> accessed in 17 November 2020.

<sup>22</sup> For more discussion on Samudra Ensemble's album *Sedayoung Kepri*, see pp. 31–32

<sup>23</sup> Find the list of performances in appendix 2 No. 12

<sup>24</sup> See some of the new works developed from mak yong dances, music and melodies, Awang Memikat by Sanggar Selembayung Tanjung Pinang <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K23ZUfgoSxI>>; and *Tariang Topeng Awang* by Sanggar Tudung Pelite (a group made by students from the Riau Islands) in Yogyakarta <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9iX0WHowkYM>> accessed in 17 November 2020.

video of this song is also available on YouTube.<sup>25</sup> Both “Proressive Mak Yong” and “Tabek” give an indication how mak yong becomes ingrained in current art production and the formation of the Malay soundscape in the Riau Islands. Additionally, besides the initiatives of local musicians, the local government promotes mak yong through cultural festivals that take part in the reconstruction of a Malay cultural realm. In the festivals, all art performances, speeches, and ceremonies in which local political elites address audiences play their roles in making mak yong into an artistic icon and one of the notable Malay identity markers.

### Artistic icon and identity markers

In December 2018, the village of Mantang Lama on the island of Mantang hosted Festival Mak Yong.<sup>26</sup> The event offered three groups of young actors of mak yong, who were all school children from primary through senior high school. The event declared Mantang as “Kampung Mak Yong” (“the village of mak yong”) that represented the pride of owning such a traditional performing art that the next generation of performers would inherit. At the event, Bintan district head Apri Sujadi pronounced his support for the endeavours of making Mantang the “village of mak yong.” The people of Mantang subsequently coined a slogan that represented the attempts to protect the art form—“never will mak yong disappear from Mantang” (*Takkan mak yong hilang di Mantang*). The slogan imitates the oath ascribed to Hang Tuah—“never will the Malay disappear from the earth” (*takkan Melayu hilang di bumi*). The same use of these slogans is that they are deployed to evoke emotional feelings by positioning the Malays in the critical position of being pushed aside by other political powers or being anxious when facing cultural change. One line in the lyrics of “Hymne Tanah Melayu” at the beginning of this chapter indicates a similar way of playing with words for certain emotional effects. The line relays that even though “I” live far away from “my” Malay homeland, “never will our custom part from my soul” (*takkan lah hilang resam di jiwa*). Looking at the slogan declaring that mak yong will never disappear, it expresses fear of loss of the traditional art form and a strong will to keep it alive and make it the identity marker of the village.<sup>27</sup>

The performance of mak yong at the festival in Mantang creates an identity of a place, which is mainly the village of Mantang Lama on Mantang Island, and to a certain extent, the island as a whole. In this respect, the performance marks out the change of identity. It functions like a transition ritual that creates a new identity and designates the birth of a new status. At the festival, the performers and the people of Mantang did something through the performance. They declared the status of the “village of mak yong” and, at the same time, performed the theatre

<sup>25</sup> Listen and see the video recording of Tabek <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kIcYRXm-90Y>> 17 November 2020.

<sup>26</sup> This festival was held in 2018 and 2019 but not in 2020.

<sup>27</sup> The slogan “*Takkan Mak Yong Hilang di Mantang*” has been printed on posters, T-shirts, and made into a video teaser for Festival Mak Yong Mantang.

form on stage. With the declaration, the people want to guarantee the continuation of the art practice so that it “will never disappear” and simultaneously proves this by showing a new generation of performers. It would be a different situation if the people had simply made a placard with a text saying “this is the village of mak yong” without showing the tradition still alive and how it could be experienced as a stage performance. It would most probably not affect anything and could not solidify any identity without showing the actual conduct of what is being uttered.

Making an identity marker out of mak yong requires a continuous effort. The presence of the district head of Bintan and his public support have been regarded as morally and politically taking sides with the people’s concerns about the art form. Apri Sujadi’s presence indicates a populist way of identity politics that follows his precursor Ansar Ahmad (r. 2005–2015) in forging the identity of Bintan District. The formation of local identity through making an artistic icon of mak yong has commenced and is being continued. An icon (artistic, landmark, or in other forms), according to my observation, is a selected form of cultural heritage that has been chosen in consideration of uniqueness in representing locality to be promoted for tourism festival. The district bureaucracy of Bintan has initiated the creation of iconic mak yong and sponsored a survey to list heritage objects and practices found in Bintan’s administrative territory. Local historian Aswandi Syahri was hired to make a heritage list for Bintan. The Department of Tourism and Culture of Bintan, subsequently, published his work titled *Khazanah Peninggalan Sejarah dan Warisan Seni-Budaya Kabupaten Bintan* (Treasure of Historical Remains and Cultural Heritage in Bintan District) (Aswandi Syahri 2009).

A published book on mak yong by Aswandi Syahri sponsored by the Department of Tourism and Culture of Bintan has endorsed the act of making mak yong a cultural icon. The state institution officially assigned new meanings to the art form and its significance in the present. In the publication *Mak Yong Teater Tradisional Kabupaten Kepulauan Riau* (“Mak Yong Traditional Theatre Form of the District of Riau Islands”—renamed into District of Bintan in 2005), the author states:

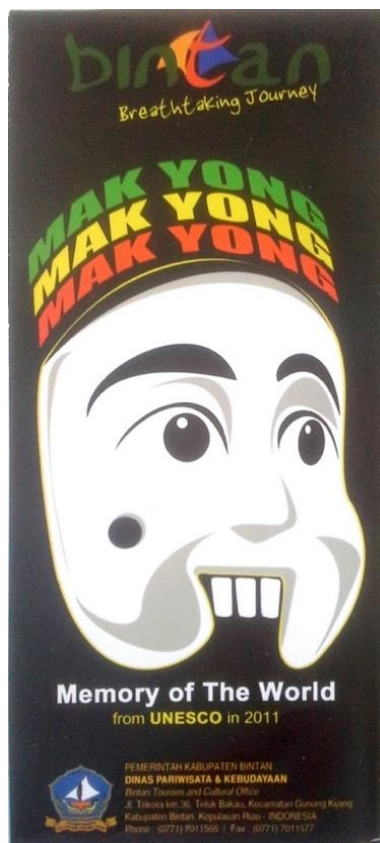
Once being divided to become several districts and municipalities that comprise Tanjung Pinang and Batam cities, the districts of Karimun, Natuna, Lingga, and the Riau Islands [renamed into Bintan], which are united within the administrative region of the Riau Islands province, it is necessary for Bintan as the ‘main district’ of the other districts established from it, to consider the necessity of having a traditional art that can be made into the identity marker of the district. In the past, there were traditional art forms in the region that are now part of Bintan District...now the one and the only traditional theatre that still exists in the territory of Bintan District and is feasible to be brought forward as an art form that will be characteristic of the district in the near future is the traditional theatre mak yong (Aswandi Syahri 2005: 1–3).<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> I selected some sentences from Aswandi’s book that are relevant in this particular topic. From the same pages of the book, I also used a quote in Chapter 2. In this chapter, the passage is translated from the original text: “Setelah dimekarkan menjadi beberapa kabupaten dan kota yang meliputi Kota Tanjung Pinang, Kota Batam, Kabupaten Karimun, Natuna, Lingga dan Kabupaten Kepulauan



Aswandi Syahri made an important contribution to the creation of the artistic icon. His consideration is reflected in the following action. The ramification of such an idea of making an artistic icon has permeated into local identity politics and the tourism economy. Each district in the Riau Islands Province creates its artistic icon, such as “Gurindam Duabelas” that represents Tanjung Pinang, Batam has the dance form called tari jogi, Karimun promotes joget dangkong, Anambas is represented by gubang mask dance, mendu theatre represents Natuna, Lingga promotes bangsawan theatre, and so does Bintan with mak yong. H.M. Sani, the Governor of Riau Islands, gave support to the creation of cultural representation of the Riau Islands Malayness that comprises these art forms that have been made into artistic icons of the province and to be presented at tourist festivals (Kartomi 2019: 20–21; Van der Putten 2011: 224). Bintan District’s Department of Tourism and Culture made a booth in its office that exhibits mak yong props (costume, jewelry), video recordings, photographs of performances on the wall, and a tourist promotion brochure with a simplified image of a mak yong mask on its cover page (Figure 3.4).



Bintan District organises cultural festivals regularly in order to attract local and foreign tourists. Those touristic events become the occasions in which mak yong performers take to the stage. Several festivals in Bintan are branded as the Bintan Art Festival, Festival Teater Bintan, and Festival Sungai Enam. At such events, masters of ceremonies echo the artistic icon of Bintan, mak yong, by commentaries. The master of ceremonies gives evocative comments on mak yong before and after the performances of mak yong troupes. At the Pentas Seni Gerakan Seniman Masuk Sekolah art festival, school children performed several art forms that they learned from local

Figure 3. 4 Brochure of tourist promotion in Bintan with the image of the mask of the female royal attendant, Inang Pengasuh. Regarding the status given to mak yong as the Memory of the World mentioned in the brochure, I discuss it further in Chapter 2

Riau, yang kemudian disatukan kembali dalam wilayah administrasi provinsi kepulauan Riau, sudah selayaknya kini Kabupaten Bintan sebagai kabupaten induk memikirkan persoalan kesenian tradisional yang dapat dijadikan ciri dan identitasnya sebagai daerah yang sebelumnya memiliki sejumlah kesenian tradisional yang cukup membanggakan... Satu satunya teater tradisional yang masih tersisa di wilayah Kabupaten Bintan dan layak ditampilkan kemuka sebagai sebuah kesenian yang akan menjadi ciri khas daerah ini di masa mendatang adalah teater tradisional mak yong...”



artists as part of the GSMS program.<sup>29</sup> Mustafa Abbas acted as the master of ceremonies at this event and commented on the performance of mak yong troupes from two schools, SMP 23 Mantang and SMA 1 Mantang. He said “mak yong is the icon of Bintan District” and called for the audience’s diligence in preserving this art form. Mustafa complimented the performance of the troupe from SMP 23 and then introduced the troupe from SMA 1 Mantang, which would perform the play *Raja Lak Kenarong*.<sup>30</sup>

The event and Mustafa’s comments create space for mak yong practitioners to be open to special attention from political elites, particularly because of the status given to mak yong as the icon of the district and as one of the icons of the province. Besides encouraging the audience to preserve their heritage, such comments as Mustafa’s and other event hosts are made in front of political leaders or high-ranking bureaucrats and addressed directly to them. An example for this kind of speech was made by a leader of the mak yong troupe from Tanjung Pinang, Mak Yong Muda of Yayasan Konservatori Seni. Syafaruddin, the leader of the troupe, took the stage and had a conversation with a pair of masters of ceremonies at the Festival Bahari Kepri in Tanjung Pinang town. While the performers were getting set up to perform, Syafaruddin introduced the troupe to the audience. He enumerated several events in Indonesia, at which the troupe had performed mak yong, including those in Bali, Singapore, and Thailand. He announced this track record to the audience to make a good impression about this group. To close his introduction, Syafaruddin urged Nurdin Basirun, the former governor of Riau Islands (2016–2019), and other local political elites and the local government officials who attended the event for their encouragement and financial support.

However, we are also asking for support from the elites and high-ranking officials. If we artists are the only ones working to preserve this tradition in our region, I don’t believe we will succeed as we don’t have the means. Hopefully, the Governor will be moved enough to preserve our tradition.<sup>31</sup>

The main point that Syafaruddin makes is for that of financial assistance. This has been the top concern of local artists in the Riau Islands, who expect attention from the local authority to support Malay art traditions.<sup>32</sup> The above commentary indicates an aim to promote mak yong as the icon of Malay identity and lift it higher than the other art practices brought by the other ethnic groups to

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<sup>29</sup> Gerakan Seniman Masuk Sekolah (GSMS) is a project managed by the Subdirector of Arts of the Ministry of Education and Culture to be implemented in Indonesia’s regions. This project recruited senior and young artists to train school children in art as an extracurricular subject. For more information about this project, see <<https://gsms.kemdikbud.go.id>> accessed on 14 July 2020.

<sup>30</sup> I paraphrased Mustafa Abbas’ comments. Pentas Seni GSMS in Kijang, 14 December 2017

<sup>31</sup> Translated from the original speech of Syafaruddin at Festival Bahari Kepri on 15 October 2017 in Tanjung Pinang: “namun demikian kite juga minta dorongan dari orang-orang besa(r) tu di atas. Kalau kite saje yang nak mendorong bende tu supaye lestari di daerah kite ni, tak sanggup juga, tak ada hepeng nyo awak...mudah-mudahan Pak Gubernur teusik sikit hati die untuk melestarikan tradisi kite ini, aa.”

<sup>32</sup> For more discussion on the support from the local authorities and other state agencies, see Chapter 2.

the region. In this sense, cultural festivals serve as public space and public display, which is controlled to promote certain cultural representations and subordinate the others. Local politics of identity give more support to the Malay traditional arts, which is not uncontested. Groups of people from other ethnic backgrounds who migrated to the Riau Islands develop their art practices and organise their own cultural festivals. Balinese people develop their own traditional music. Chinese groups organise their New Year Festival of Mooncake. Javanese people have fostered the flat horse kuda kepang and reyog ponorogo dances and celebrated their identity at Javanese festivals, which are related to the support to and from the Javanese political elites in the region. Festivals that express ethnic identity and show off mass mobilisation are linked to political events like local elections, which provide momentum to consolidate the members of the group in the name of their ethnic identities. Associations of Sundanese and Batak people organised art and traditional ceremonies in early 2020, for example, that invited local political elites to show their potential voters as warming up for the upcoming election. Regardless of the contestation, Malayness remains dominant in public culture with support from the local administrations at the district and provincial levels. Besides promotion through cultural festivals, Malay identity politics can be looked at through the formation of official heritage. Of 50 items of the official heritage of the Riau Islands declared from 2013 to 2020, none of these are from outside Malay culture. Other ethnic groups, such as Chinese who have resided in the region since the eighteenth century (Trocki 1979: 32), are not represented on the list of cultural heritage of the Riau Islands.

Since the ethnic diversity in reality cannot be denied, the proponents of Malay identity manage it through cultural representations, which are shown to the public mostly in cultural festivals. At Festival Bahari Kepri in 2017, the organisers invited several groups of dancers of Batak and Minang people to perform, which also represent other ethnic cultures brought by migrants to the Riau Islands. The commentaries upon their performances declared that the local Malays appreciate other migrant cultures and want to live together in harmony. But the newcomers needed to respect the host culture. The comments are advising all citizens in the Riau Islands to accept diversity and respect Malayness as being situated at the top of the local ethno-cultural hierarchy. One event host at this festival pronounced:

Here in Tanjung Pinang, within the realm of Malay culture, people from other regions came and also want to perform their traditions. However, they have to respect the culture where they live now.<sup>33</sup>

It is not only the newcomers that have to respect Malay culture and identity, but also the indigenous sea nomads, the Orang Laut. Commentaries on the performance elevate Malayness above the Orang Laut, who are considered as non-

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<sup>33</sup> Translated from the original speech of the Master of Ceremonies at Festival Bahari Kepri, 15 October 2017: “Berarti di Tanjung Pinang ini, dalam budaya Melayu, orang-orang dari daerah lain datang kemari juga hendak menampilkan ee adat istiadat mereka. Tapi tetap, dimana bumi dipijak, di situ langit dijunjung, aa macam itu ye...”

Malay or not-yet-Malay. In the bangsawan theatre performance held by Sanggar Sri Mahkota Lingga in Daik, Lingga, event host Murwanto Edem Derry commented on two Orang Laut teenagers who joined the troupe. Introducing the actors, Murwanto dramatised the presence of the dark-skinned performers as something bizarre but also as an achievement that two Orang Laut teenagers were now able to play bangsawan. He implied that they deserved to become Malay (*masuk Melayu*) (Figure 3.5). Festival Sungai Enam on 2 November 2017 involved a handful of Orang Laut in a boat parade. Two among a dozen of boats in the parade were Orang Laut boats, which passed in front of the crowd standing along the coastline about 30 meters away from the parade. Event host Mustafa Abbas commented that these Orang Laut had been converted to Islam, and therefore they had become Malay.



Figure 3. 5 A tableau vivant of bangsawan from a group of junior-high-school students in Daik, trained by senior artists from Sanggar Sri Mahkota Lingga. The event host (second from left-hand side) introduced one of the Orang Laut performers sitting on the second position from the right-hand side. The event was held on 5 October 2017. Photograph by Alan Darmawan.

Cultural festivals elevate Malayness as the identity of the Riau Islands, as I have shown in the festivals in Bintan and Lingga Districts. In Tanjung Pinang, the presence of the former Governor of Riau Islands, Nurdin Basirun, and other officials at the Festival Bahari Kepri in 2017 echoed the political resonance for the enhancement of Malay identity. Masters of ceremonies for this event commented on the political elites and connect the festival to the scale of the cultural configuration in the Riau Islands. The masters of ceremonies introduced the Yayasan Konservatori Seni mak yong troupe while they were setting the stage for their performance. They (MC 1 is male and MC 2 is female) had a conversation that epitomised the process of becoming Malay through their personal stories to give a model to the audience and enhance Malay culture and identity. I quote part of their conversation below.

- MC 1: Yeah, I've been here in Tanjung Pinang for long time.
- MC 2: Ah, you've been in Tanjung Pinang for a while.
- MC 1: Yeah! And I've had nasi lemak so I don't want to go back to Manado. Hahaha...
- MC 2: Haha. After eating Tanjung Pinang's nasi lemak, you don't want to go back, right?
- MC 1: No need! It's nice here in Tanjung Pinang!
- MC 2: You've become Malay as well?
- MC 1: Ah, you should know this. When I went to Tanjung Balai Karimun, I saw people from all ethnic backgrounds, like Batak, Minangkabau, Javanese, everything, and they all speak Malay.
- MC 2: They all speak Malay?
- MC 1: They do! When I met someone, they'd say, 'ape kabar?' None of them say 'horas bah,' no, no way. So did the Batak man, a porter, who was unloading stuff, saying 'a, berape lah berape.' You know, this Batak guy can speak the local Malay too. How great is that? So, we in Tanjung Pinang, let's use the Malay language!
- MC 2: Exactly!
- MC 1: Aha it's like us, wearing 'baju kurung,' traditional Malay clothes.
- MC 2: Yes, we are wearing traditional Malay clothes even though I'm from Java and you're from Manado.
- MC 1: That's right, but we make a good team, don't we!
- MC 2: And we keep highly upholding Malay culture, okay!
- MC 1: *Iyo, kita su lama di Tanjung Pinang.*
- MC 2: *O sudah lama di Tanjung Pinang*
- MC 1: *Iyo, cuma su makan itu nasi lemak, jadi sudah tak nak balik ke Manado. Hahaha...*
- MC 2: *Haha. Jadi kalau sudah makan nasi lemak Tanjung Pinang, tak nak balik lagi e?*
- MC 1: *Dah sudahlah, dekat Tanjung Pinang aje, sedap!*
- MC 2: *Dah jadi Melayu juga e?*
- MC 1: *Eh, tapi ada satu hal tau, waktu saye pegi ke Tanjung Balai, Tanjung Balai Karimun, itu semue dari suku suku, Batak, Minang, Jawe, ape segala macam, semue cakap Melayu.*
- MC 2: *Semue cakap melayu e?*
- MC 1: *Semue cakap Melayu. Jadi kalau ketemu, 'ape kaba(r)?' aa tak ade yang pake bahase 'o horas bah' tak ade, tak ade, aa...jadi orang batak yang bongka(r)-bongka(r) barang tu, 'a berape, lah berape' eh, orang Batak ni pande juge bahase Melayu. Aa itulah mantapnye tu aa. Jadi kite Tanjung Pinang ni, budayakanlah bahase Melayu!*
- MC 2: *Betul!*
- MC 1: *Aa macam you and me pakai baju kurung, baju Melayu.*
- MC 2: *Oh pakai baju kurung e, saye Jawe awak Manado.*
- MC 1: *Aa betul, tapi kite bersinerji ye!*
- MC 2: *Tapi kite tetap menjunjung tinggi budaya Melayu ye!*

The MCs' conversation above gives an example of the process of becoming Malay (*masuk Melayu*), which ties in closely with the notion of "Malayisation." Phases to become Malay, in the context of the conversation, are indicated by characteristics that have been assigned meanings as being Malay, such as appetite in local cooking (*nasi lemak*), the local register of the Malay language, and dressing style. The MCs tell their stories and present themselves as models for becoming Malay.<sup>34</sup> The story begins from the migration to Tanjung Pinang; the initial interest is to the Malay food, *nasi lemak*. In the beginning, MC 1 spoke in the Manadonese dialect of Indonesian language by typically abbreviating *sudah* into *su* (*iyo, kita su lama di Tanjung Pinang*) and then shifted dialects to show his ability to speak in the local Malay dialect. MC 2 admitted that she came from Java but showed off her fluent local Malay accent. They encouraged the audience to internalise Malay language by giving an exaggerated example of migrants speaking Malay, then judged it as great for "being here" in the Malay land. Moreover, the MCs exemplified the image of Malayness in bodily performance through their attire with Malay traditional clothes (*baju kurung*, also called or identified as, *baju Melayu*). At the end of this exchange, they encouraged relative newcomers to the region to also become Malay by respecting Malay culture and working together through the bond of Malay identity. In the context of the festival, this persuasion to embrace Malay culture juxtaposes the embodiment of Malayness in *mak yong* performance that followed the conversation.



Figure 3. 6 A pair of masters of ceremonies who are wearing Malay traditional clothes invite a *mak yong* group to perform, give respect to the Governor of Riau Islands and other high-rank bureaucrats, and encourage the audience to internalise Malay culture and language (Festival Bahari Kepri in Tanjung Pinang, 15 October 2017). Photograph by Alan Darmawan.

<sup>34</sup> Dwi Saptarini, the female MC, is a third-generation Javanese who was born in the Riau Islands. The other MC, Andri Mamantung, originally came from North Sulawesi.

Malayisation is not merely encouraging Malayness as the identity of the province, but rather, to encourage other people to become Malay. This phenomenon should be contextualised in the continuum of change—remaking Malay land, the cultural realm, and the Malay people, and should be looked at as endeavours to defend Malay dignity (*marwah*) and to connect to the Malay World in restoring the relationship and strengthening brotherhood with the other Malay groups across national borders. The historical background of Riau Province (in mainland Sumatra and the Riau Islands) can shed light on the Malayisation that emerged as resistance against the marginalisation of the local Malays imposed structurally from the national government of Indonesia, which is said to subvert their *marwah*. Will Derks's works illuminate how cultural movements in the province played a key role to resist "Indonesianisation" through literature and art while strengthening Malayness (Derks 1994, 1997). However, since the failure of the Free Riau Movement's struggle for independence, Malayisation should be seen as a cultural movement without any political intent to delegitimise the Indonesian state, but culturally persistent to invigorate Malayness rather than Indonesianness as the identity of the Riau Islands' citizens. This is of course negotiated since the islands are within Indonesia's territory, but Malayness is closer to the lives of the people and rooted profoundly in a shared history and culture with other Malay communities in the Malay World. However, this Malayisation unavoidably defines Malayness in a way that it has essentialised some cultural elements to represent Malay identity. This leads to freezing some aspects of culture, such as the artistic icons, and standardising them in a certain way that prevents them from being changed (Chapter 2).

What mak yong contributes to this identity formation is that it represents several basic elements imbued with values that are characterised as Malayness. Practitioners of the art form and cultural activists emphasise that mak yong theatrical form consists of several aspects regarded as the core of Malay culture, such as language and its dialect, pantun, songs, music and melody, dance, and attire. Therefore, as an iconic form of cultural representation, performing mak yong is considered as equal to performing the epitome of Malayness. The making of mak yong into an icon, in this sense, represents the formation of identity and the intent of promoting Malay traditional culture. A closer look at cultural festivals reveals how the making of an icon of Malay traditional culture such as mak yong represents the attempts of shaping identity and revitalising culture. An example is Revitalisasi Budaya Melayu/RBM (Revitalising Malay Culture), which is thought as the project pioneering revitalisation of tradition since the Riau Islands Province was established. It started in 2004 and continued in 2008 and 2012, in which it boosted mak yong as the icon of both Malay identity and the project of revitalisation. Envisioning the revitalisation, former Tanjung Pinang Mayor Suryatati Manan (2003–2013) stated:

One thing considered important for RBM is that it can serve as a vehicle to connect the Malay communities, their supporters, activists, academics, and cultural workers from anywhere in the world, especially from several provinces in

Indonesia and other countries. Through this event, various issues about culture, particularly Malay culture, can be discussed and solutions found for the continued attempts to preserve and develop it so that it will not be left behind by the times (Abdul Kadir 2009: ix).<sup>35</sup>

Conserving and developing tradition, as stated above, can be found in the making of mak yong into an icon. Conservation could consequently fall into the freezing of the tradition. By contrast, developing traditions require change and adjustment to the current context. For example, RBM in 2012 gave support to the efforts of preserving the “authentic” form of mak yong, in which three groups from Kelantan, Patani, and the Riau Islands were brought together to perform. During the opening ceremony of the event, a number of participants wore mak yong masks while dancing and parading along the main streets of the town. Dancing with mak yong masks during parades was a tradition developed in the context of mak yong revival. This is a new creation of dance to celebrate the iconic tradition of mak yong. The parade, however, seems to enact the icon. It brings the icon into life. In another parade, Bintan District Head Apri Sujadi wore a mak yong mask while parading along the street in Daik, Lingga. Apri led the contingent for Bintan in the opening ceremony of the festival of recitation of the Qur’an (MTQ) in 2018. The parade is a spectacle that enacts the icon and, more importantly, represents the support of the local political leader to the orchestration of Malay identity.

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<sup>35</sup> Translated from the opening speech of Suryatati A Manan: Suatu perkara yang dipandang mustahak dilaksanakannya RBM, dapat menjadi wahana bertemu dan berkumpulnya siapa saja sebagai pendukung, penggiat, pemikir dan pekerja budaya Melayu dari berbagai belahan dunia, utamanya dari beberapa provinsi di Indonesia dan beberapa negara di luar negeri. Melalui perhelatan itu, berbagai persoalan menyangkut budaya, khususnya budaya Melayu dapat dibincangkan dan dicarikan jalan terbaik untuk terus berikhtiar melestarikan dan mengembangkannya, sehingga tidak menjadi budaya yang tertinggal oleh zaman.





## Chapter 4

### Space for words: the stage performance and audience

Thus, ‘word’ is the beginning and the ending, so we live in a space made by words. We also have to revive ‘Malayness’ by the means of words, as it is a concept, a word.<sup>1</sup>

The above passage illustrates the role of words as tools to revive culture, as concepts perceived to format culture, as the substitution of reality, or even as reality itself as a form of virtual reality. Tarmizi, a poet from Batam City, uttered this sentiment to explain his monthly art performance project called Batam Dark Home Poetry Reading or Rumahitam Batam Berpuisi (RBB). Since early 2017, a group of poets in this city started the RBB project and concentrated their performance activities around “Laman Kata,” an “open space for words.” *Laman*, as a concept, refers to either a physical or virtual space of cultural activities. In a concrete manifestation in this case, it signifies a place or a stage where poets across generations perform poetry readings.

The idea of *laman* corresponds with the imagery of the “Malay house” or a small hut called *teratak* with its own yard. *Laman* implies an open-air front yard of an earthen house in which certain social events and celebrations may take place. In the Riau Islands, where most of the settlements have been built along the shore, the *laman* stands over the ground and water as a jetty or platform called *pelantar*. Local poets and authors use the term extensively in literary works to create a certain context or a spatial nuance of an archipelagic environment.<sup>2</sup> *Pelantar Kata*,<sup>3</sup> a literary magazine that had circulated in this area, takes the term for its name, which is conceptually equal with Laman Kata. A circle of young poets in Tanjung Pinang founded a club for their own interests in literary production called Komunitas Pelantar Kusam, the community of the run-down jetty. I consider both terms *laman* and *pelantar* as local concepts that signify a place of cultural activities, such as stage or events and spaces for literary works in print or electronic media, where actors, authors, and poets perform their craft.

An open space or *laman* for cultural activities has been an ambition that Tanjung Pinang wanted to achieve through the cultural festival Revitalisasi Budaya Melayu/RBM (Revitalising Malay Culture, which was held in 2004, 2008, and

<sup>1</sup> Translated from the original sentences: “Jadi kata itu mula dan akhir, jadi kita akan selalu hidup di laman kata itu. Kita, kita juga harus menghidupkan ‘kemelayuan’ itu dengan kata, karena ‘Melayu’ itu juga kata.” Interview with Tarmizi in Batam, 14 September 2018 (cf. see the recording of the interview in this documentary <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O9w7DKVTuNU&t=330s>>).

<sup>2</sup> Some examples of *laman* are the poem “Dongeng Pasir” by Husnizar Hood; the novel *Atan Anak Pulau* by Ary Sastra (2012) and its adaptation into a film; and the poem by Tarmizi (Chapter 3).

<sup>3</sup> *Pelantar Kata* was a literary magazine that local poet Junewal Mukhtar (Lawen) edited, published monthly, and distributed among his personal network in the first half of 2012. The last edition of this magazine that I found in Tanjung Pinang and Lingga was the fourth volume (May 2012).

2012). In 2008 former Mayor Suryatati A. Manan (2003–2013) promoted the idea of Tanjung Pinang as the land of rich Malay cultural heritage and announced the municipality's vision to revive the role of a historical "Riau" as the heir of the Sultanate of Melaka (cf. Chapter 2). As the former place of Riau-Lingga's vice-royal seat, Tanjung Pinang<sup>4</sup> aimed to achieve a recently invented reputation, which places itself at the centre of Malay civilisation ("pusat tamadun Melayu"). Suryatati interpreted the imagery "centre" as the place for the efforts of preserving, developing, and practicing Malay traditional culture, or "*laman dalam upaya pelestarian, pembinaan dan pemanfaatan budaya Melayu*" (Abdul Malik 2010: ix). Meanwhile, in everyday life in the town, one can engage in the public sphere along the shoreline of Tanjung Pinang, where a park large enough to stage cultural events is popular for recreational use. This park, Laman Boenda, is a place, but it does not merely mean a physical space. Rather, it implies the idea of the place of origin, a "mother's lap" that interlinks with a title that the provincial government coined for the Riau Islands, "Bunda Tanah Melayu," the "motherland of the Malays."

On the *laman* or at a cultural event, people can experience the literary and art works as they are recited, sung, and embodied in dramatic forms. A group of poets occasionally inscribes "words" in their event's name to represent the major role of words, such as *malam kata-kata* ("the night of words"), *malam seribu kata* ("the night of thousand words"), to name a few instances. However, these are not exclusively events for a poetry readings. The above-mentioned events mostly collaborate with other art forms and are part of a bigger cultural festival that exhibits traditional games, arts, rituals, and practices. The use of "words," therefore, implies an oral presentation and aural consumption. Since it becomes a recurrent event, a large cultural festival is usually held on the main stage and in some other supplementary places. This kind of event I call with a reference to a concept that Milton Singer introduced as a "cultural performance." The concept refers to the performance event that functions as media to communicate the content of culture considered as central to the tradition's bearers (Singer 1972: 71, 1995: 27). In the Riau Islands, various art forms take the stage. This also applies to *mak yong*, which is frequently performed before the public as an essentialised form of Malay heritage and as an identity marker.

This chapter focuses on the way cultural performances work as elevated or special events. According to Lewis (2013: 4–5), they are "occasions that are set apart from the ordinary daily round of activities," or "frameworks that involve the 'intensification of awareness.'" From the perspective of the ritual process, the special event provides a space for direct interaction between stage and audience and among the members of the audience in a relationship characterised by "homogeneity and comradeship" (Turner 1977b: 96). Victor Turner's concept of "communitas" illuminates the quality that a ritual process could achieve. It indicates a "deep personal interaction" that obtains "mutual understanding" at the

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<sup>4</sup> The former Malay royal houses are located upstream on Carang Creek (Hulu Riau) and Penyengat Islands, which are currently part of the administrative territory of Tanjung Pinang.

“existential level,” in which a group of people is felt as “essentially us” (Turner 1982: 47–48). According to Graham St. John, *communitas* “designates a feeling of immediate community, and may involve the sharing of special knowledge and understanding” (St. John 2008: 7). Referring to this concept to view cultural events in the Riau Islands, I observe the way the interaction between stage and audience in the performance space works. In this chapter, I consider the interaction as communication employing symbols or as symbolic action. How does *mak yong* performance evoke a sense of identity? How does the interaction in the performance stimulate certain effects in a way that people attach certain feelings to the art form?

The previous chapter showed the role of cultural performance (especially *mak yong*) in shaping a soundscape and Malay identity markers. This chapter focuses particularly on *mak yong*’s stage performance, in which performers and audiences create the performance ambience and compose dramatic “texts” together in their interactive communication in the oral presentation. Looking at cultural festivals, I consider the social circumstances as contexts that shape meanings. I view the performance context as a situation that is formed by negotiation. The organisers of an event, such as international Malay cultural festivals, arrange the event and limit the duration of the performance. The organisers and performers negotiate about duration and type of stage in oral presentation. The performers, who expect to stage *mak yong* in a way considered as “traditional,” deal with the government’s intervention, the organisers’ format of the festival, and the change of public tastes or audiences’ expectations.

This chapter examines the processes that involve performers and organisers of an event to seek a consensual way of performance. I view the performance space as a product of negotiation and something that is constructed. The performers negotiate with the event organisers, the local elites in bureaucracy that impose their respective interests. Concerning the performance space, I bring forward the question: in what ways does *mak yong* theatre involve audiences and performers in the oral presentation? In this respect, I view the performance as a ritual-like process and analyse it from a processual perspective, which looks at the interactive communication between performers and audiences utilising symbols during the presentation of *mak yong* as a stage drama.

### **Stage drama**

In the corpus of ethnographic reports, anthropologists have studied performance as part of other social institutions, but there are fewer studies that focus on the performance itself, including aspects of its structure, cultural meaning, and place within a broad pattern of community life (Beeman 1993: 370). Most anthropologists come up with a general outlook of performance activities. Milton Singer posited that “cultural performance” is a key concept of symbolic and embodied aspects of cultural tradition (Singer 1972, 1995). Clifford Geertz was concerned with the entanglement of pride in cockfighting competitions in Bali (Geertz 1972)

and the theatricality of the political institution of Balinese state (Geertz 1980). Nevertheless, other studies have paid attention to a particular form of performance activities, in which scholars reconsider Victor Turner's legacy. Besides Richard Schechner, who developed performance studies (Schechner 2002), more recent anthropological studies on ritual and performance reassess Turner's theory in the fields of social actions, theatre forms, rituals, sports, and spectacles (St. John 2008; Lewis 2013).

Victor Turner, who started his studies on ritual, expanded his fields of inquiry to other forms of performance. He applied the ritual-process approach to observe the dramatic process of the various forms of performance and performative actions. Despite the extent of Turner's field of study, he postulated that the various forms of performance manifest as either "social drama" or "stage drama." What he looked at is the dramatic sequences of the two kinds of drama. If the dramatic sequences of social drama work out in the social field as an "isolable sequence of social interactions of a conflictive, competitive or agonistic type" (Turner 1987: 33), the stage drama reflects the episodic tensions and conflicts in the narratives in "a host of aesthetic experimental frames, symbols, and hypothetical plotting" (Turner 1986: 34). Social drama and stage drama reflect the interests of anthropological studies in performance, which span from theatricality of social life, ritual, theatre, up to the performance aspect of folklore.

Anthropologists and folklorists develop analytical tools to understand the symbolic meaning in performance. A processual perspective applies to investigate the ritual process (Gennep 1960; Turner 1977b), which is also employed extensively to social drama or dramatic sequence in the social field, such as political protests on a city street, revolution, and the establishment of a religious sect (Turner 1987). This also applies to the "ritual process" perspective to carnival, opera, and theatre (Turner 1982). However, most of the studies of performance and theatricality focus on the internal relationship of symbols, or semantic and formalist analysis, or "the meaning-centered approach," while the effectiveness of symbols at provoking emotional feeling is rarely investigated (Schieffelin 2013: 108–9). Edward L. Schieffelin took it one step further by considering the importance of the arrangement of performance as a socially constructed situation, "in which the participants experience symbolic meanings as part of the process of what they are doing" (Schieffelin 2013: 109). In this chapter, I approach *mak yong* performance from the ritual process perspective by taking into account the organisation of performance and audience participation that constructs the performance and considers its context as part of the processes of the revival of tradition in a changing society.

In the context of the revival and the recent configuration of Malay identity, *mak yong* performance reflects the tension and dilemma in the way of presentation. The performance duration, the arena stage, and the animistic rituals are some concerns the performers deal with (Chapter 1). They negotiate with the organisers of the event about these issues. As with the reduction of duration, eclecticism of

stage style, whether an arena or proscenium stage, and the elimination of the opening and closing rituals are not simply a change of fashion. They indicate the selection, elimination, maintenance, and change of the necessary elements that constitute the tradition. The dilemma over continuing the tradition as it is, partially changing it, or letting it perish is at the centre of dramatic sequences in attempts to revive, reproduce, and pass down the tradition to the younger generation. Oral presentation also reflects tensions and shows eclecticism in choosing the style of stage performance depending on the expectations of the organisers (Chapter 3).

According to Turner, stage drama mirrors the social tensions in society that reflect the dilemma in dealing with history and what “culture has crystallised from the past” (Turner 1986: 33). The dramatic play performs the tensions in the stories that are composed of life experiences. Dramatic stories are intersubjective experiences. They are “life as told” and are made of the selected sequences of the “life as lived” (Turner and Bruner 1986: 6). Experience involves human perception and emotional feelings (hope, optimism, anxieties, fear, and the likes) that frame the selected sequences and tensions with a beginning and ending. Malay dramatic forms show such tensions, either in fictional stories or historical narratives. The fictional stories in *mendu* and *langlang buana* theatre forms recount the tales of demi-god princes who deal with a certain crisis or have to accomplish a mission in their quests to seek their partner in marriage. This symbolises the continuation of tradition and power.<sup>5</sup> *Bangsawan* theatre that plays both fictional and historical narratives focuses mainly on tensions in the royal house of a certain kingdom, as a legacy from the past, which is facing a crisis and tension in a succession of power due to either internal conflicts or external challenges.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, *mak yong* drama shows the stories about an anxious prince who seeks to know his origins, an anxious king who deals with the succession of power, and a queen who gets pregnant and has cravings. A quest takes place in looking for a solution, in which a prince encounters strangers, difficulties, and challenges. Presented playfully and amusingly, *mak yong* stories conclude with a happy ending.

Stage drama amplifies an idea or world view and shapes experience. Audiences will find nuance shaped by music, dialect, and visual appearance. *Sanggar Sri Mahkota Lingga*, a *bangsawan* theatre troupe from Daik, Lingga, performed the story of Sultan Mahmud Ri’ayat Syah (1761–1812) to popularise the invented heroic narrative of the sultan and support his nomination for the title of Indonesian

<sup>5</sup> *Mendu* and *Langlang Buana* are two theatrical forms found in Natuna, Riau Islands. Both play a single story focusing on the quest of Dewa Mandu and the prince Indra Bumaya. See the story of Dewa Mandu in several accounts (Badru 1999; Chambert-Loir 1980). I have summarised the story of *Langlang Buana* theatre from studies carried out by BPNB Kepulauan Riau. See also the story told by a senior performer from Natuna in “Sejarah Singkat Kesenian Lang-Lang Buana Asal Natuna,” online <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-KThA-R3L8c>> accessed 1 September 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Fictional stories played in *bangsawan* are taken from well-known stories in the Malay world or local tales, such as *Laksamana Elang Laut* (Anastasia Wiwik et. al. 2017) and *Asmara Putra Mahkota* performed by *Sanggar Sri Mahkota Lingga* in 2017. The most frequent historical narrative played in *bangsawan* in Riau Islands is the regicide of Johor’s king, Sultan Mahmud II. A more recent play performed by *bangsawan* groups up until 2020 is the story of Sultan Mahmud Ri’ayat Syah (Mahmud III), the heir of the Johor dynasty, who settled in Lingga.

national hero. The staging of this play continued even after the successful nomination and the bestowal of the status. Local artists use the theatre performance to enact the figure of the sultan, cultivate devotion towards him, and provide a perspective to see the present-day Riau Islands as the remnants of the former realm of the Riau-Lingga-Johor-Pahang Sultanate with Daik, Lingga, as its centre. This story, with its experimental frames, plotting, and dramatic episodes, constitutes the “world” that the local people could inhabit.

If bangsawan is instrumentalised to exalt the historical Malay kingdom,<sup>7</sup> mak yong serves to popularise fictional stories. These stories do not target any historical period, but rather, the basic ideas of a Malay cultural realm, magical power, and social structure. Mak yong theatre performs dramatic stories with their tensions and employs a general schema of episodes. First, a wealthy kingdom and just king deal with a crisis or anxiety. This is followed by the separation or exile of the royal family members or an entrusted man, who wanders through the forest or foreign country and solve the problem. This results in a return to order and a positive ending. These episodes appear with a host of motives. Gulam-Sharwar Yousof, a scholar studying primarily mak yong from Kelantan, set the mak yong stories in a stemma developed from the main story of a divine prince with a magic flying kite rising to the heavenly kingdom, *Dewa Muda*, to become twelve stories (Yousof 1976: 83–84, 1982a: 112, 2018: 51). Some scholars follow this story tree, though they did not show how it develops from one story and did not prove their connection as branches (*cabang*) or twigs (*ranting*), either in Kelantan (Hardwick 2013) or Riau Islands traditions (Pudentia MPSS 2000: 15).

Regarding this stemma-type metaphor, we can compare with the repertoire of the wayang kulit shadow theatre that consists of well-known tales from the Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Panji. Amin Sweeney, who studied the Malay version of Ramayana, illustrated the stories in the Rama cycle as a tree (*pokok*) comprising branches (*cabang*) and ranting (*twigs*) stories (Sweeney 1972: 264). Nevertheless, a collection of mak yong stories does not reflect such a branching system in the tradition. Stories collected by Mubin Sheppard (1974a, 1974b) in two volumes of *Cerita-Cerita Makyung* do not indicate chronological order in the time of the story world. Yousof is also not sure about the branching that he elaborated on briefly in his thesis (1976: 83–84). In the Riau Islands, the practitioners do not embrace such terms (*pokok*, *cabang*, *ranting*) in their tradition for the collection of stories. What we find is diverse stories in terms of reference to the external sources in their composition, which show the intertextuality of the tales instead of a story tree that grows and develops “purely” from within.

*Wak Perambun*, a story about a hunter and mythical birdwoman, has a close connection with the tale *Manora* that is well-known in southern Thailand and the northern part of the Malay Peninsula. The tale is played in a theatrical form

<sup>7</sup> Besides Sanggar Sri Mahkota Lingga, a bangsawan troupe from Dabo Singkep called Sanggar Diram Perkasa is also promoting the historical narrative of Sultan Mahmud III through their play on the sultan. For further discussion about this group, see Kornhauser 2019.

developed in the regions called manora or nora or nora chatrī (Ginsburg 1972; Horstmann 2012; Plowright 1998; Sheppard 1973; Yousof 1982b), which is about a hunter named Bun who captured one of the *kinnari* birdwomen. However, Kelantanese mak yong's repertoire seemingly did not adopt this tale. In the Riau Islands, another version of the *kinnari* tale emphasises more on the wanderings of the hunter, Wak Perambun, who was appointed by King Perak Situn (Thai: Phra Suthon) to hunt a deer in the forest but brought home the heavenly princess Nang Nora. Four manuscripts of mak yong stories written from the oral version that is owned by Satar's family in the Riau Islands adopt Perso-Arabic and Javanese names for their stock characters and places. Some examples include the plays *Raja Badruzzaman di Negeri Bustan Thahira*, *Temenggung Air Wangsa di Bukit Kuripan*, and *Raja Syah Johan di Negeri Damsyik*.<sup>8</sup> These various names from other cultural complexes are adopted by mak yong theatre, which frames these stories in the settings of the magical animistic story world and with the standard plot of dramatic sequences composed of shared motives. However, despite sharing the same motives with other stories, the composition of a single story has developed its specific dramatic elements, tensions, and conflicts.

My close reading of the stories found in the Riau Islands reveals their episodes, tensions, and dramatic elements, such as in *Raja Bungsu Sakti*, also known as *Gunung Berintan*. In the kingdom of Lenggang Cahaya, Raja Bungsu Sakti found a huge ship anchoring in the harbour of his country. He instructed his attendant to investigate the ship, who then returned with some information and a gift. The captain and crew of the ship brought the company of Raja Lela Muda from the country of Sebemban. They headed for the country of Gunung Berintan to ask for the hand of the Princess Rencana Muda in marriage.<sup>9</sup> Bungsu Sakti's attendant reported his investigation and handed a gift from the captain: a gold nugget. Bungsu Sakti felt insulted by the captain who claimed that the country of Sebemban was wealthier than Lenggang Cahaya. Being embarrassed by the ship's crew, Bungsu Sakti intended to thwart their mission and restore his dignity. With two magical heirlooms, the forest people's cloth (*sarung Batak*), and the magical stick (*tongkat sakti*), he started wandering and turned into a vagabond man of the forest known as Pembatak. Once he arrived at Gunung Berintan's royal garden, he robbed Princess Rencana Muda of her jewelry and asked for her hand in marriage. Raja Johan Syah Nyaya of Gunung Berintan and his men arrested Pembatak and put him in jail. Bungsu Sakti's mother, Jerak Jentara, morphed into a tiger and came to Gunung Berintan to cause chaos. Having failed to defeat the tiger, Raja Johan Syah Nyaya asked Pembatak to beat the tiger and return order. When Pembatak succeeds, Raja Johan Syah Nyaya married his daughter Putri Rencana

<sup>8</sup> This includes other names of dramatis personae and places mentioned in the stories, such as Badruzzaman's wife Siti Zawiyah, his counterpart Raja Malikuzzaman of Thahira Kestan, the raja's wife Siti Syamsiyah, and their daughter Badrul Asyik.

<sup>9</sup> Rencana is also pronounced *ghencana*, which refers to the Sanskrit-originated Malay word *kenchana*. In literary texts, this means gold, which, in colloquial Malay, is *mas* (Wilkinson 1908: 140). The use of the term *rencana* or *ghencana* in mak yong is not only for humans, but also animals, such as *Kijang Bertanduk Rencana*, the barking deer with horns of gold.

Muda to the dirty-vagabond man as a reward. This version of the story in the philological analysis of a live performance uncovers the modification of this last motif performed by a troupe from Tanjung Pinang Yayasan Konservatori Seni (see the edition in Chapter 5 with commentaries and annotations).

The above story indicates that the quest aims to restore dignity due to Bungsu Sakti's promise to get rid of shame (*membasuh arang di muka*) and to take revenge (*mencuci karat di hati*). This story is a version in the Riau Islands, which is slightly different from that on the Malay Peninsula (Sheppard 1974a: 1–20), which continues with Bungsu Sakti's travels with his wife Putri Ucana (Rencana Muda) back to Lenggang Cahaya.<sup>10</sup> Emphasis on attempts to restore dignity has become a source of anxiety, from which the drama evolves. This emphasis denotes the crucial point of the story, which accentuates the sense of dignity and its sensibility. In addition to this, the plot moves to the prince's quest for retaliation.

The drive for revenge also occurs in the story of a young prince in the country of Negeri Setambak Bunga titled *Raja Lak Kenarong*. It was Raja Lak Kenarong's father, Raja Berma Sakti, who married a genie who had incarnated as a beautiful woman. The king's new wife, who desired the throne, agitated the king to sentence Raja Lak Kenarong and his mother to death. The execution took place in the jungle, where the executor did not behead the prince nor his mother but released them instead. The two lived in exile, where Raja Lak Kenarong found an old man named Datuk Mersing Matapi in an orchard on the edge of the forest. He then became his instructor in martial arts and magical skills. After completing his studies, Raja Lak Kenarong returned to Negeri Setambak Bunga, where a genie now ruled the country. Tensions escalated ever since the genie had obtained power; Raja Lak Kenarong had come back from exile for redemption. The prince battled against the usurper who deposed his father from the throne. With magical power and skills in the martial arts, Raja Lak Kenarong defeated the genie and restored order in the kingdom. He invited his mother back to the country and married his teacher's daughter, Putri Nang Disun.<sup>11</sup>

The story is centered on the tensions over control of the kingdom. The way it plays out is that the natural heir wins back the kingdom by defeating the usurper. Dramatic sequences of the story escalate the crisis from banishment to life in exile and finally to the battle where the prince redeems himself and takes back the throne. Such tensions appear also in the story *Raja Air Wangsa di Bukit Kuripan*, where the titular character challenged his two sons to look for tiger milk from the

<sup>10</sup> In Mantang Island, as told to me by Pak Gani, the story of Raja Bungsu Sakti also continues with the travel of Raja Bungsu Sakti back to Lenggang Cahaya with his wife, Putri Rencana Muda. However, Sheppard's version elaborates more about dramatic scenes in their voyage passing Pulau Mati Angin, in which an ogre kidnapped the princess and a monkey king helped Raja Bungsu Sakti save his wife. This is reminiscent of the Ramayana tale. Said Parman, who leads the Yayasan Konser-vatori Seni troupe, shortened the story that is ended by the marriage of Raja Bungsu Sakti, which is altered to become the marriage of Raja Johan Syah Nyaya. See the edition in Chapter 5.

<sup>11</sup> Nang: a variant of yang (who, which) (Wilkinson 1908: 150). Disun seems to be a local variation in pronouncing *dusun* (orchard) as I cannot find it in any standard Malay dictionary. Putri Nang Disun, therefore, means the woman who lives in the orchard, which the story also implies.



heavenly kingdom. Mastan Darman, the eldest son of full royal descent, obtained the milk. The other son, Alang Baya, whose mother is a commoner who resided in the forest (*kiwi-kiwi*), killed his brother and took the milk. However, Alang Baya could not open the magical container. The god Betala Guru's<sup>12</sup> daughter, Putri Sakerba, flew down to the earth to revive Mastan Darman. He then returned to the country to open the container and use the milk to cure his father's eyes. Mastan Darman's success makes him crown prince and ostracises his stepbrother. In these episodic tensions, the princes' quest is a test through which their father examines their abilities to be the crown prince, their potential, and loyalty to the king. The milk is not necessary for the king because he merely pretended to be sick. Yet, in this test, the king obtains the justification he needs to select the right heir for the throne. Through this quest, Mastan Darman also gets to know that his stepbrother fooled him and cannot be trusted as an ally. Simply put, the quest is a chance to prove their loyalty to the king, around which the tensions revolve.

The other stories that employ loyalty as the key theme on which dramatic episodes develop include *Wak Perambun* and *Putri Timun Muda*. Wak Perambun was appointed by the king to look for white deer meat. However, he was skeptical that he could do as the king ordered, which was to find a white deer that was currently pregnant with its first fawn, was the offspring of parents who were the eldest among their siblings, and lived in the oldest forest.<sup>13</sup> Yet, Wak Perambun had to take the task to prove his loyalty. It is the same with the story of *Putri Timun Muda*, in which Princess Timun Muda's husband was tested by her father to look for a deer in the jungle. Even though Raja Muda knew that the king wanted him to fail in the jungle, he had to show his loyalty and obey the order. When a forest tribe killed Raja Muda, Betala Guru revived his body.

The above themes—dignity, loyalty, and the right to power—serve as the basis from which stories develop dramatic episodes and around which tensions and conflicts occur. Despite particular themes in the individual story, it shares motives with the other stories as building blocks or chunks. A princess with her attendant and ladies-in-waiting who relaxes in the royal garden (picking flowers, bathing, joking, and singing) appears in several stories. The garden is the place of encounter between the princess and the prince, who comes from another country. Pembatak infiltrated the royal garden to see Putri Rencana Muda in the *Raja Bungsu Sakti* story. It is the royal garden in the story of *Raja Air Wangsa di Bukit Kuripan*, where Mastan Darman encountered Putri Sakerba and Putri Pinang Udara in the heavenly kingdom looked for the tiger's milk. In the story of *Raja Syah Johan di Negeri Damsyik*, the king infiltrated the royal garden of the Perca Kingdom while hunting. There, he became acquainted with the princess Putri Johan Maligan and fell in love.

<sup>12</sup> Betala Guru or Betara Guru refers to Siva from Hindu pantheon of gods (Wilkinson 1908: 70).

<sup>13</sup> In Malay: rusa putih bunting sulung, sulung ayah sulung bunde, sulung segenap cerang rimbanya.

Banishment from the country and living in exile is also a motif that appears in several stories. Raja Berma Sakti of Setambak Bunga banished his first wife and his son, Raja Lak Kenarong. The mother and the son lived in exile before reclaiming the throne. In *Putri Siput Gondang*, the king, Raja Gondang, found that his wife had given birth to a huge conch. The king felt disgraced by it. He drove away the queen and the snail, who lived in exile until a baby girl came out from the snail. The same motif of a giant conch living in exile also appears in the story of *Anak Raja Gondang* found in the Malay Peninsula (Sheppard 1974b: 40–62). In *Putri Siput Gondang*, a girl came out of the snail. Yet in *Anak Raja Gondang*, the snail gave birth to a young boy. Despite the difference, the stories seem like two versions of the same tale, in which the plot moves from the same crisis due to disgrace and exile.

Living in exile, feeling insulted or disgraced, succession issues, and maintaining loyalty are the critical situations that develop the dramatic stories of mak yong. The crisis leads to tensions or conflicts, through which the drama denotes a contradiction or contestation of values to distinguish loyalty from treason, right heir from usurper, dignity from humiliation, and nobility from commoner. The above stories with their crises and tensions are manifested through the mak yong performance. The stage performance of mak yong, in this respect, is the centre of the audience's attention. It is the performance that instantiates the fictional story world. The performers manifest the story and convey didactic messages or values through symbols, from which audiences may choose from.

### **The symbols in performance process**

The stage performance of mak yong is the centre of attention. It is symbols that play roles in the event, which I consider as a ritual-like process. According to Victor Turner, the ritual symbols are “the smallest units of ritual behaviour, whether object, activity, relationship, word, gesture, or spatial arrangement in a ritual situation” (Turner 1977a: 77). From Turner's definition, I contextualise the ritual symbols into mak yong performance. Every element of mak yong performance—character, movement, gesture, costume, language style, a particular word, and hand props like rattan sticks—is a symbol that I analyse in its performance context and in the sociocultural context of the Riau Islands. Putting the symbols in the process of performance, I observe from the perspective that Turner formulated as the “processual symbolic analysis” (Turner 1977a: 77). It is in the process of performance in which the symbols mediate the communication between performers and audiences.

In mak yong theatre, the king or prince is the main symbol in the play. The king is magical and represents the divine power, which is central in the world and the given kingdom. Although such power has divine legitimation, it has to be established in a certain social context. In this context, the king represents nobility, dignity, and power. This main symbol is presented in a relationship with the royal attendant, Awang Pengasuh. The attendant represents the ordinary people, loyalty,

and submission. The relationship between “king” and “subject” in mak yong drama is fundamental, as it is the basis for the terrestrial kingdom’s power. The king’s song in the prelude sequence of performance implies such a relationship: “O Awang, thou art mine spirit!” (*Amboi-amboi Awang-e, semangat saya lah Awang*). *Semangat* means the spirit of life or vitality.<sup>14</sup> My interlocutors, who are well-established performers of mak yong, explained that without Awang, the king means nothing. In the play after the solo dance, the king leaves his palace to visit Awang’s place where he gives an order to his loyal attendant. This indicates the interdependency of the legitimate power of the king and the loyal subject in an inverted norm, in which the king comes to his attendant. In the play, the attendant executes the patron’s instructions, through which the plot moves forward.

The relationship between power and loyalty and the idea of balance in it has become one of the main themes in Malay chronicles as well. The *Sejarah Melayu* portrays the oath between the king Sang Sapurba and the local ruler Demang Lebar Daun. The local ruler swore that his descendants shall be the subject of the king’s throne, but they must be well treated by the king’s descendants. Sang Sapurba accepted Demang Lebar Daun’s words in exchange for loyalty (Shellabear 1995: 19–20). This kind of interdependency represents the exchange between power and loyalty. Another example is the story of Hang Tuah, which shows the importance of loyalty to one’s ruler. In the legend, the military commander Hang Jebat challenged the king of Melaka due to his sentencing Admiral Hang Tuah to death without trial. Finding out that Hang Tuah was still alive somewhere, the king instructed him to kill Hang Jebat. In the name of loyalty, Hang Tuah killed his blood brother, Hang Jebat. The ambiguous aspect of this story has given room for interpretations in several media, such as films and comics in the twentieth century used to stimulate nationalistic sentiment in Malaya (Van der Putten and Barnard 2007: 247). A 2017 theatre play in Riau Islands remediates the tale of Hang Tuah into a theatre performance, which brings Hang Jebat’s perspective to how he perceives of Hang Tuah’s blind loyalty and also criticism toward the king’s decision of sentencing Hang Tuah.<sup>15</sup> In mak yong theatre, power and loyalty are also important themes that are presented with comedy, jokes, and inverted norms by use of the clown figure Awang Pengasuh, who behaves rudely towards his “friendly king.”

The symbols that represent power and loyalty in mak yong theatre should be contextualised in the performance process. I posit that the performance is a process taking place in a “liminal” state of being, which separates the audience from their routine activities. This concept harks back to Arnold van Gennep, who coined the term to address the state of a threshold during a rite of passage (Gennep

<sup>14</sup> “The spirit of physical life; vitality, in contrast to the immortal essence of soul (*nyawa*); the breath of life; health. *Semangat* also survives as the old form of the belief in the soul, which among the ancient Malay was believed to be a bird residing in the stomach” (Wilkinson 1902: 400).

<sup>15</sup> This refers to Ary Sastra’s theatre play that took its title from the well-known theatre play Jebat Menggugat. See the video recordings of the performance sponsored by BPNB Kepulauan Riau: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ljUi1y8FhDI>> accessed on 2 September 2020.

1960: 20–21). While concluding a marriage contract during a wedding ceremony, for instance, the bride and groom are no longer bachelors but nor are they married yet. Such an indeterminate situation is what Turner refers to as being betwixt and between an old and new status, the separation from and the reintegration into daily life, which is ambiguous meanings assigned by the symbols in the ceremonial conventions (Turner 1977b: 95). Social norms do not work in this situation and are even reversed. The overturned social norms seem to be prevailing in European traditions, such as the classical Roman festival Saturnalia in which the masters serve their slaves (Standhartinger 2012: 179–80), or in the Dutch living tradition of carnival (Vastenavond), where people behave out of the acceptable daily social norms (Cornips and De Rooij 2013: 7). In comparison, some genres in theatre performances and rituals in insular Southeast Asian use cross-gender plays and cross-dressing including mak yong, where a female performer dresses up and acts as a king while a male performer acts as the female clown figure, Inang Pengasuh. In this sense, theatre performance designates liminality with its own conventions and symbols in a non-daily arrangement.



Figure 4.1 The prince (Cik Wang) is dancing with Awang Pengasuh and singing “Amboi amboi Awang-e semangat saya lah Awang.” (Picture from the performance of the group from Tanjung Pinang, Yayasan Konservatori Seni, at Festival Tamadun Melayu in Daik, Lingga, 23 November 2017. Photograph by Alan Darmawan.

Putting the relationship between king’s power and attendant’s loyalty in the liminal state of being, I look at Awang’s actions when quarreling with the king. Awang’s dirty jokes to the king sound peculiar and would be highly unlikely to occur in real life within the standards etiquette. For example, he said to the king, “*mandang muke Cik, puih!*” (“looking at your face, bwèèh!”). This happens in the context of liminality with its norms, which are different from or even contradictory of etiquette in daily life. During the play, the king performs a friendly gesture, in which Awang calls him “Cik Wang” (a shortened version of Cik Awang), a title to address any ordinary man.<sup>16</sup> The friendly king, with whom Awang Pengasuh quarrels but also gives his loyalty, is playing with checks and balances in the relationship between power and loyalty that mak yong presents to the audience.

<sup>16</sup> *Awang*, as an address to a young man or an unknown stranger, is still widely used in Riau Islands. In the Kelantanese dialect, it becomes *awe*, and in other cultural complexes in Sumatra, we can also find such an address, like *win* in Gayonese and *agam* in Acehese.

The importance of a liminal phase that contradicts the norms in daily life is that it provides a different perspective to view life. The image of the “friendly king,” in this respect, inverts the common perception of a feudal king in the Riau Islands. The question raised at this point: how does the symbolic communication in performance impact cultural change, especially in constructing the image of the Malay-self and the self-identification as Malay in the Riau Islands? Here I look at the way *mak yong* contributes to the process viewed from the perspective of processual-symbolic analysis.

Chapter 3 shows that *mak yong* performances look like a projection of the idea of Malay identity, as the embodiment of Malayness, as practices equated with the meaning of being Malay, and in the continuum of social and cultural changes. From the processual perspective, the changes imply that the seemingly fixed social reality is fluid and indeterminate. Society appears as a temporary stable form, where a “relatively well-bonded human group alternates between fixed and floating worlds” (Turner 1977b: vii). Graham St. John stated that such a processual view designates that society is in composition, in a state of becoming, and “its reproduction is dependent upon the periodic appearance ... and in the lives of individuals, of organised moment of categorical disarray and intense reflexive potential” (St. John 2008: 4). The performance process in a liminal space is potentially a reflexive moment.

In this sense, Sally Falk Moore proposed a framework to observe the roles of ritual and performance in an indeterminate situation. Her analytical tool functions to examine circumstances in which people deal with the situation formed by an incongruent relation between idealised forms of community and social reality (Moore 1975: 210). In the context of the Riau Islands, a group of activists that represent the minority Malay people attempts to promote Malayness as the dominant collective identity among other ethnic groups in the region. In the social and economic changes in Riau (including the Riau Islands) in the mid-1980s and the 1990s, the activists instrumentalised stage performances to promote Malay traditional culture and identity to strengthen the local Malays’ position as the host population towards the newcomers who constituted the majority (cf. Chapter 3). In this attempt, stage performance serves as media to convey critical commentaries upon the political and economic development and invite critical reflection. As a means of cultural movement, stage performance was deployed by the activists to provoke and direct cultural change for an intended social arrangement. Hence, stage performance was used for a campaign to restrain the change of social structure to the unwanted direction, while offering a new social arrangement and driving cultural change. Moore calls this way of striving for a new social configuration as the “processes of situational adjustment” (Moore 1975: 235).

With the establishment of the Riau Islands Province and greater regional autonomy, activists, performers, and the local authority exploited the stage performance to “re-inscribe” traditional practices, cultural heritage, and the local Malay dialect onto the people—especially younger generations—to promote the

idea of kingship, reconstruct the Malay cultural realm, and make people with other ethnic backgrounds “become” Malay. Symbols in the repetitive and periodic event of stage performances have formed a more stable and crystallised form of Malay society and identity. These attempts of making an indeterminate situation firm and of making an image of Malay society and identity concrete by the employment of symbols are, referring to Sally Falk Moore, the “processes of regularisation” (Moore 1975: 234).

My question at this point is, in what way do symbols in mak yong work in the process of regularisation? In addition to how I described the relationship between the king and his royal attendant above, Malay language is a very significant symbol in mak yong performance. The rules in the theatre tradition are that the royal family members speak in a courtly style with */-a/* endings to their words, such as *saya*, *bicara*, *apa*, while ordinary people have to speak in the style with */-e/* ending, like *saye*, *hambe*, *ape*. However, in mak yong performances, audiences will find that the */-e/* ending style is also incorporated into the royal family’s way of speaking. Chapter 5 shows that the king’s speech style with the */-e/* ending is recurrent, which sounds identical with the ordinary people’s style as represented by Awang Pengasuh and other commoner characters. Though it does not follow the rules in mak yong tradition, the infiltration of */-e/* ending sheds light on what the Riau Islanders accentuate to perform their “Malayness.” It is noticeable that in the formation of regional identity, the Malay language in the Riau Islands emphasises the */-e/* ending to distinguish it from the Indonesian language. Even though, the Indonesian language itself has been transformed from Johor Malay dialect, in which the Dutch language officials tried to standardise in the nineteenth century to become one of the formal and administrative languages in the Netherland Indies (Groeneboer 1999; Van der Putten and Al Azhar 1995).<sup>17</sup>

The young performers of Tanjung Pinang’s Yayasan Konservatori Seni troupe are taught to pronounce their dialogue with the */-e/* ending. The dialect brings to mind the lives of people in the countryside (*kampung*) and small islands (*pulau*). In the promotion of Malay identity in the context of urbanisation, modernisation, and high influx of migration, the cultural aspects in the city have been supposedly considered to be polluted, while the rural countryside way of life is authentic. It is a common assumption that Lingga’s Malay way of life is more authentic than that of people in Tanjung Pinang. Malay authors from across national borders (Malaysia, Singapore, and southern Thailand) recognise it as well through a number of poems and brief travelogues that emphasise their nostalgia in an encounter with “authentic” Malay culture at GAPENA’s writers camp in Daik, which they refer to as the “motherland of the Malays” (Rejab FI 2000). In this respect, the desire for purity reflects the contemporary idea of Malay identity.

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<sup>17</sup> It is important to note that the development of the Indonesian language is complicated since the influence of the informal style derived from the Low Malay, which developed earlier than the formal style derived from High Malay from the courtly traditions of Riau-Johor (Classical Malay). For further discussion, see Sneddon (2003).

Costumes that the female performers wear in mak yong performances show the current design of glamorous clothes yet still considered as “traditional” to visually express Malay identity. It is congruous with the current efforts of promoting costumes that have been essentialised as the Malay traditional dress (see, for example, the clothing style of the masters of ceremonies at Festival Bahari Kepri, p.113).

Both language and visual appearance are symbols that mediate communication between audiences and performers, which in repetitive performance events have contributed to the regularisation of Malay symbols and values. Processual symbolic analysis, however, requires these processes to be contextualised into the cultural event and larger social context of Riau Islands. As Malay activists, artists, and the local government organise art and cultural festivals in which mak yong is performed, I turn my attention to the festival to look at the way they stage the art form, where symbols play key roles. The festival as the context of mak yong performance does not simply determine the way the art form is performed. Rather, it has been a vehicle for political elites to convey their message through symbols, to show his or her stance in taking sides in the promotion of Malay traditional culture and identity, and more importantly, to obtain popularity.

### **The festival**

Cultural festivals are events that the local government sponsors to promote local identity and attract tourists. It is a current global trend that tourist festivals have been a tool for economic development, celebrating identity and locality, such as those in Brazil (Grünwald 2002), Spain (Crespi-Vallbona and Richards 2007), China (Ma and Lew 2012), Japan (Hashimoto 2017), and Indonesia. A place identity, cultural heritage, local culture, and ethnic identity are unique facets that have been constructed and presented for tourists to experience and enjoy. In the Riau Islands, the investment in tourism for the government’s revenue entails the promotion of Malay culture and identity, including for the performing arts, games, cooking, and textile production<sup>18</sup> to attract domestic tourists and those coming from the neighbouring countries. The government has also attempted to increase the frequency of repeat visits (Isa, Ariyanto, and Kiumarsi 2020). As a top-down initiative, the local government allocates budget, establishes a committee to organise the festival, arranges a schedule, prepares the groups of performers, and invites guests from other areas, such as Malay activists or artists from other provinces in Sumatra, Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand. For some festivals, such as dance and music contests, the committee provides a prize for the winners. The committee advertises the event through print and electronic media a few weeks before the day.

The main site for holding a festival is mostly an open space in the city centre. The main stage of the festival in Tanjung Pinang is usually in the front yard of the former Dutch Resident’s building, which is now known as Gedung Daerah (Figure 4.2). The arrangement of space shows stakeholders participating in the

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<sup>18</sup> Heritage textiles that the local authorities promote is the luxury scarf *tudung manto* from Lingga and the *batik gonggong* textile with its snail motif.

festival, including peddlers and government institutions erecting stands or booths to exhibit local crafts and other products they promote. Figure 4.3 illustrates the same spatial arrangement of cultural festival in Bintan District, which is in an open space in Kijang town named Lapangan Relief Aneka Tambang. As Figure 4.4 shows, the cultural festival in Lingga takes place in an open space in the yard of the government complex building in its capital, Daik. In these spatial arrangements, the organisers of the festival set up a decorated proscenium stage in its centre and the place for audience is opposite the stage front. This arrangement gives space for the community to participate. Local sellers erect their stalls to sell food, toys, snacks, and other kinds of stuff along the roadside. Peddlers mingle in the crowd to increase sales.

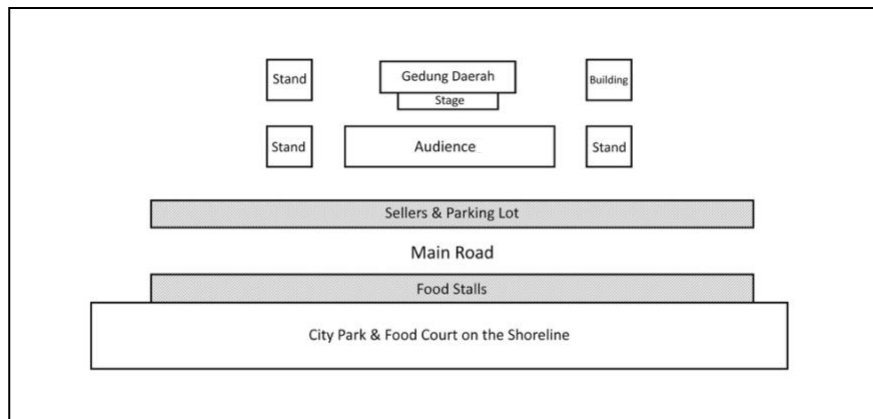


Figure 4. 2 Sketch of the festival grounds in Tanjung Pinang: Gedung Daerah

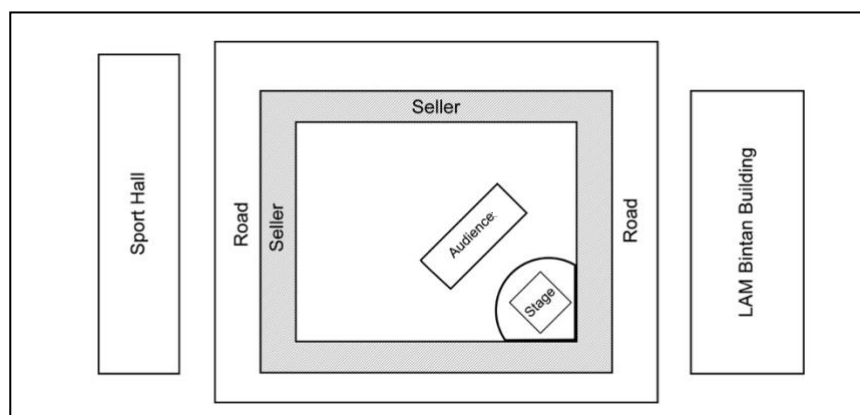


Figure 4.3 Sketch of the festival grounds in Kijang, Bintan:Lapangan Relief ANTAM



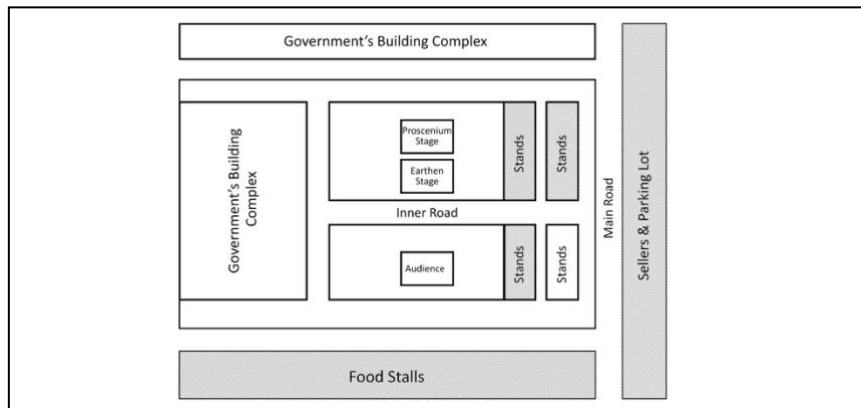


Figure 4.4 Sketch of the festival grounds in Daik, Lingga, in the field of the government complex

During these events that disrupt mundane activities, people visit the festival, either during the day or at night depending on the schedule. Many ride motorbikes on the street. Some of them park their motorbikes on the roadside that share places with the sellers. This is the crowded and noisy event that I encountered in the Riau Islands. Sounds of motorbikes converge with the sellers' screams, the toy sellers' trumpets, youngsters' chats, and loudspeakers from the stage. The whole atmosphere is lively. Outside from one's daily routine, social interaction takes place among visitors who spend their time together. At these festivals, one can meet and talk with high-ranking officials, poets, performers, and tourists. In my experience at Festival Tamadun Melayu in Daik, I saw some middle-ranking officials from the provincial library (Perpustakaan Daerah) who engaged with the people who visited their stand. Civil servants who are bangsawan theatre performers decorated the stage. Among them, I sat and talked with Said Parman, who was the head of one of the departments in Lingga District. In the late afternoon, I had a snack and chatted with some friends at a food stall. At night, high-ranking bureaucrats sat with other members of audience to watch mak yong. At Festival Bahari Kepri 2017, the Governor of Riau Islands recited a poem, as did the district head of Bintan, who additionally wore a mak yong mask and danced on the street with his contingent at the Qur'an Recitation contest in Daik in 2018.

The above atmosphere characterises a liminal situation, in which the social structure does not work as it does in everyday life. Such a cultural event has its own arrangement as a liminal space. Liminality is in between the separation from daily life and the reintegration into it, between the situation in which there is no structure at all or "anti-structure" and "social structure." The festival, as described above, is not without arrangement nor is it every-day arrangement; it is not without structure, nor is it every-day social structure. Besides the delightful ambience, noise, and crowds, every single festival has its own agenda or specific purpose for celebrating locality and identity (see Chapter 2). This agenda could be either local or transnational, which has effects on the way mak yong is performed.

Festival Sungai Enam promotes Sungai Enam as a Malay cultural village located on the south coast of Bintan Island. Bintan Regency encourages it to become the culinary centre for *otak-otak*.<sup>19</sup> Festival Teater Bintan primarily promotes mak yong and gives a stage to other art forms, such as joget dangkong, gambus music, and bangsawan theatre. Festival Bahari Kepri promotes the historical “Riau” and Penyengat Island as the former centre of Riau-Johor-Lingga Sultanate. Festival Tamadun Melayu in Lingga promotes Sultan Mahmud Ri’ayat Syah and Lingga as the former centre of the Riau-Lingga-Johor-Pahang Sultanate. Malay activists centered in Pekanbaru founded a festival of Malay culture in Batam in 1999 called Kenduri Seni Melayu. The festival aims to promote Malay traditional culture and identity in the industrial city of Batam. In Mantang Island, Festival Mak Yong Mantang promotes mak yong and a *kampung* on the island, Mantang Kayu Arang, as the “foremost” place of the development for the art form in the Riau Islands.

In the above festivals, political elites show themselves and their interests through symbols in displays, actions, and speeches. Occasionally at Festival Mak Yong Mantang, organisers have invited Bintan’s district head to perform the official opening ceremony. At most festivals, the organisers printed a huge banner advertising the festival with pictures of the district head and its deputy to be displayed at prominent locations around town. The organisers also set a large banner as the backdrop for the festival main stage. One or two days before the festival, the organisers put up hundreds of flags of the political party led by the district head. At Festival Sungai Enam, it was blue-coloured flags fixed along the roadside around the main place of the festival. This was a common view at the festival during Apri Sujadi’s term in office, which represents his party, Partai Demokrat. One of my friends in Bintan told me that it was yellow-colour flags fixed around the location of the festival during Ansar Ahmad’s time in office, which represents the former ruling party, Golkar.

Because of the decentralised and highly personalised nature of Indonesian politics, leaders at the district or provincial levels typically demand every event held during his or her administration have their name and picture associated with it as being a patron. Cultural festivals are one of the events that mediate the leader to the public—to become more popular, create an image of a generous leader, one who is friendly and close to the people. The organisers of Festival Teater Bintan gave the stage to Apri Sujadi to hand the certificate of honour and voucher for money to the performers to showcase his concern for Malay traditional arts. The Governor of the Riau Islands recited a poem that exaggerated the courageous qualities of the Malay legendary hero Hang Tuah at Festival Sastra Internasional Gunung Bintan. This had the effect of relating his closeness to the circle of local poets, similar to what he had done at Festival Bahari Kepri. Opening or closing speeches at these festivals are typical moments when local leaders can make their

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<sup>19</sup> Otak-otak is a special dish made of shrimp paste of chopped fish mixed with some seasoning and wrapped in a nipah-leaf before being grilled.

physical presence known to attendees. At the opening of the Festival Tamadun Melayu in Lingga in 2017, Alias Wello, the district head, invited Indonesian Vice President Jusuf Kalla to give a speech and officiate the opening of the festival. The organisers welcomed Jusuf Kalla and performed a traditional ceremony of bestowing the Malay title of Sri Perdana Wira Negara on him before his speech. Meanwhile, Wello addressed his welcome speech to any investor who wanted to invest in Lingga. There is a not-so-hidden agenda in everyday local politics on Wello's plan to reopen bauxite mining in Lingga, which has triggered controversy among people.

Cultural festivals seem to be in agreement with the local leaders' populist strategy to impress closeness to the people. As a result, festival organisers must adjust their plans with the political leaders' schedules in mind. For Festival Teater Bintan, the date changed three times to fit with the district head's schedule. For the artists, performing for political leaders is a chance to gain reputation and acknowledgment. Mak Yong Warisan leader Satar, who helped the organisers arrange the program and put his group on the first night to perform at the Festival Teater Bintan, moved the group's performance to the second night since the district head could not attend on the first night. For local bureaucracy, cultural festivals are a tourist project, which is packaged for local audiences and tourists. In this tourist promotion, they want to present as much as possible of the traditional art forms because it is considered to be an achievement. The amount spent on these festivals is also considered an achievement. Organisers collaborate with a wide range of agents so as to offer as many different performances and activities as possible throughout the event.

Time is an important factor for festival organisers, particularly in weighing the preferences of the intended audience. Three hours is the normal duration for events within a single night. At many festivals that start between eight and nine in the evening, about half of the audience leaves the performance at eleven at night, and a few of them stay for thirty minutes more. Simply put, audiences are generally willing to stay around the stage between eight and half past eleven at night. When staging several groups of performers in a single night, organisers divide this time between groups, where mak yong performance tend to receive more stage time than other performances. In a coordination meeting between the organisers and the performers at Festival Teater Bintan, both sides negotiated the performance duration and agreed that mak yong troupes would get thirty minutes each, while the other music and dance groups were given half of that time.

The stage layout is always negotiated in every festival since a festival has different organisers, agendas, and targets. Festival Teater Bintan and Festival Bahari Kepri both used proscenium stages. At Festival Tamadun Melayu in Daik Lingga, Said Parman, who had been a high-ranking bureaucrat and also led the mak yong troupe from Tanjung Pinang, convinced the organisers to change to an earthen stage. He admitted that it was due to his nostalgia with mak yong performances in the past that he had seen in Mantang. The earthen stage was

considered as the “traditional” way of staging mak yong. Because of this, he tried to show the old style when performing mak yong on the arena stage with kerosene lamps. Technically, this stage brings together performers and audiences in a spatial arrangement that position them close enough to interact intimately during the performance. However, Said Parman stated that the stage he designed is a reconstruction from that of the traditional way he found in Mantang Island.

People and performers in Mantang are proud of the rectangular wooden shed whose use they claim to be part of the authentic way of performing mak yong. It is part of the negotiation or their offer to any request for performance in their village to erect a wooden shed as the stage. Pak Gani talked about a recording process commissioned by a theatre director from Singapore in 2013, in which he felt satisfied performing mak yong over two consecutive days as a complete performance as he regarded this as being authentic. In 2018, a team from the Institute for Preservation of Cultural Values (BPNB) of Riau Islands documented the performance of the mak yong group in Mantang Island. In negotiations with BPNB, Pak Gani followed the instructions of the film makers and producer when recording interviews and at the rehearsal. However, he proceeded with his own plans for designing the performance space. The people of Mantang helped to collect mangrove wood from around the village to erect the shed with a boat sail as its roof. This process of involving the community illustrates the “traditional” way of organising communal entertainment.

Organising a festival and preparing the stage is one aspect. Another aspect, though, is the performers preparing themselves in intense training and rehearsals before the event. In the preparation for Festival Teater Bintan in 2017, the organisers alerted the performers of the intended format of the festival performance. During the rehearsal, I witnessed how the performers recreated the play. Satar tweaked the title of the play from Gunung Berintan to Gunung Bintan to impress his engagement with the efforts of making Mount Bintan as the landmark of Bintan District. Pak Gani and Pak Dormat, who trained the young performers in Mantang for a staging event of art-training at the GSMS school project, inserted two stanzas of pantun to praise the district head and the Department of Tourism and Culture.

The performers adjust the play to the event and, most importantly, to the performance duration. Most mak yong plays are truncated in certain parts or have episodes omitted entirely. Rehearsals are usually where these cuts are decided upon. In Mantang Island, Pak Gani would decide what sections to cut and how to transition between episodes to accommodate short performance durations that festival organisers would impose on his group. Satar also used this approach to deal with performance time limits, but Said Parman condensed the play without omitting plot points. In several performances, his Yayasan Konservatori Seni was given durations of about two hours. These stories that were traditionally performed across several nights were then condensed into two hours. Simply put, attempts to condense and cut the plays are made to adjust to the format of festival. In both cases, a synopsis about the whole story is usually read to audience so they are

aware of the whole story. The mak yong groups have to prepare a synopsis of the story, which the master of ceremony will read shortly before the performance starts. The making and reading of the synopsis of the plays indicates the effort to reintroduce and popularise the stories that people left behind and were dissociated from in their tradition.

Rehearsals as mentioned above are important for the performers, in which they have intensified training and prepared for the staging event. Schechner (2002: 70) pointed out that rehearsals in theatre production could be seen as the process of separation from daily routine, in which the performers set up and finalise their product. The construction and preparation of the stage by the community in Mantang and the intensification of training by the performers are important phases heading towards the performance. It is, therefore, necessary to consider the rehearsal in the analysis of mak yong theatre performance as the first stage separating performers from daily life, where they prepare to enter the liminal phase of the actual stage performance.

### **The stage performance: a country of words**

Since music creates a virtual movement of time and dance creates a virtual dynamic image as Susanne K. Langer illustrated (Langer 1957: 8), mak yong, which incorporates both elements, composes a “virtual reality.” The performance embodies a story and makes the forms of action come alive. Both performers and audiences are engaged in the performance process, in instantiating the world of stories. Mak yong practitioners perform stories in standard sequences, which are the structure that systematically forms the actual performance.

Sequences in mak yong performances are arranged in this schema: giving respect (*betabek*); the king’s solo dance; the king’s visit to his attendant’s house; prelude; crisis; quest or exile; tension or conflict; solving problems; ending; and the closing dance. The above schema is the main consideration in dividing the units of philological analysis (Chapter 5). The partition takes into account also the narrative, in which one particular unit of the sequence should contain particular themes of the story. Based on this consideration, for example, I have made the first three sequences into one unit of analysis as they consist of narrative dances and songs that serve as the prelude to the story. Firstly, the king/prince sits and dances in a sitting position, sings *betabek*,<sup>20</sup> and announces the beginning of the story with stock phrases, like *ilang goyak cerita nak timbul*. *Goyak*, *royak*, or *wayat* is the local variation for *riwayat*, meaning story. The other theatrical forms employ the same stock phrases, such as wayang Siam using *timbul tesebut*, *timbul royat*, and *hilang royat* (Sweeney 1972:54). Mendu from Natuna Islands uses the phrase *ilang wayat*. It is important to note that Said Parman removes this phrase in the *betabek*

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<sup>20</sup> This song is also called *lagu bonghei* (some variations of pronouncing it include *bonge*, *bonghei*, *pong-we*). Practitioners in the Riau Islands admitted their ignorance on the meaning of these Kelantanese phrases. According to Patricia Hardwick, the term *Bong-we* (in Kelantanese pronunciation) refers to the arena of cockfighting (Hardwick 2009: 142).

song as he wants to modify and condense the song and focus more on giving respect to the audience (see episode “1. Giving respect to audience, Chapter 5). However, two other groups from Mantang Island and Kijang town retain it.

As the performance starts with the above words, the performers humbly pay respect to the audience—either human or spirits—as the songs imply. Secondly, after the ritual-like dance in the *betabek*, the king performs a solo dance that represents his sovereignty, activities, and departure from the royal house. Thirdly, the king travels to see his attendant, Awang Pengasuh. The performers present these three phases in a connecting narrative with, and cannot make them separate or eliminate them from, the story that begins from the prelude, in which the king declares his identity and gives a command (*titah perintah*) to Awang Pengasuh.

Two opening and closing rituals (*buka tanah* and *tutup tanah*) designate the commencement and the closure of the performance or the sequences. The rituals function symbolically as gates, through which performers and audiences enter the performance space, which is the story world of mak yong. From the technical aspect, the rituals aim to deal with supernatural intervention, either from the spirits or other people using black magic. The rituals are not generally applied by all groups. Satar does not consistently apply the rituals, while Said Parman made some changes to them. The group from Mantang steadfastly performs the rituals with few changes (see pp. 40–43). The latter group even consistently uses a rectangular wooden shed at the event in the village as a construct of the stage. The construct symbolises the boundaries of the stage protected by a shaman from any magical intervention.

Accordingly, I look at the performance process between the two rituals, in which symbols play their roles in instantiating the story world. It is symbols in this liminal phase that manifest the story using body, sound, and movement, which mediate the communication between the audience and performers. Related to the themes in mak yong, the symbols play their roles in composing the dramatic stories about power, dignity, and loyalty on stage. If we look at the themes of mak yong, they seem universal instead of local. How can the universal themes manifested through symbols create an image of the Malay-self and evoke the self-identification of being Malay? What makes mak yong distinctively Malay? As will become clear in the following discussion, it is the use of specific terms or words as symbols that take an effect or sensation of being in a “world” attached historically and culturally to the meanings and feelings interpreted as Malay.

The words that have been essentialised and felt as Malay build the world of mak yong stories. These consist of geographical landscape, the Malay state, and characters. Moreover, mak yong characters seem realistic. The characters reflect social life in a Malay kingdom with their position in a social structure, such as royal attendants, Awang and Inang Pengasuh; the warrior Datuk Panglima; the chief of marketplace Datuk Pengulu Pekan; and the commoners like Wak Pakih Jenang. Female performers dance using stylised movements, while male

performers dance in less stylistic movements. The masks that the male performers wear are combined with movements to shape the characters, such as Awang Pengasuh with the mask of the clown figure, elderly people with gestures of shaky hands, and Pembatak with a scary-looking mask and rude gestures. In addition to this, certain characteristics explicitly mark the characters, such as Raja Johan Syah “Nyaya”, meaning the unjust king Johan Syah and forest man Pembatak said to have a frightening face, ugly, bumpy head, and dirty teeth with yellow plaque, which is likened to fermented durian paste (*tempoyak*).<sup>21</sup>

Words create imagined places and landscapes where the characters live. The king/prince’s hall in the royal house and outside the palace is named Ledang Balai and Balai Peranginan. The princess/queen’s hall is called Balai Anjung. The village (*kampong*), orchard (*dusun*), marketplace (*pekan pesara*), forest (*hutan*), and the ocean *laot* form the environmental setting, which is centered in the king’s abode called *negeri*. Symbolically, *negeri* is a city, which is contrary to the forest where the wildlife and forest tribes or vagabond people (Kiwi-kiwi, Pembatak, and Peran Hutan) live. The village (*kampong*) is in the countryside of the king’s abode, where ordinary people live. Unlike bangsawan theatre performances that use painted backdrops to help visualise the place or settings (the palace, the beach, the village, and the forest), mak yong forces the audience to imagine fictional reality with words, such as the geographical landscape.

Words name places and geographical landscapes; words can also define the times. Unlike historical narratives of Sultan Mahmud played in bangsawan (either Mahmud III of Lingga or Mahmud II of Johor), mak yong’s fictional story world can be derived from any era and can only be made sense of during the stage performance. As the plot moves and the settings change, the times indicated in dialogues are morning (*pagi*) or noon (*tengah hari*). However, some performers play with this. If bangsawan brings the imagination of eighteenth-century Riau-Johor under Sultan Mahmud III to the present in which the audience can take values from the sultan’s stance against Dutch colonial rule, some mak yong performers bring sociopolitical issues into mak yong’s fictional world. In the opening of the 2015 Congress of the Democratic Party (Partai Demokrat) in Batam, local poet and politician Husnizar Hood and his wife Peppy Chandra performed mak yong.<sup>22</sup> Husnizar, who acted as Awang Pengasuh, and Peppy, who acted as the king, viewed and commented upon the contemporary political development and the succession of the Indonesian president from Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono to Joko Widodo. In this kind of performance, mak yong serves as a window to look at the political development in which the performers alter its symbols to communicate with the audience.

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<sup>21</sup> In Malay: Orang tak serupa orang, hantu tak serupa hantu, muka dia berutu-rutu, tahi gigi macam tempoyak.

<sup>22</sup> See the video recording online: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iDeFRDefRgo>> accessed on 30 November 2020.

The above fictional story world works in a certain rhythm of movement as a living form, which is illustrated by the sound of music, utterances, dance, and gestures. What drives this “world” at play in symbolic and technical matters? It is words that function as tools to steer and technically move the play. In the magical story world, the mantra *pulang pulih* that is recited by Betala Guru is so powerful as to revive a dead body. In the story of *Temenggung Air Wangsa di Bukit Kuripan*, Mastan Darman, who was killed by his stepbrother on the way back to the palace after their quest looking for tiger’s milk, had been revived by Putri Sakerba from the heavenly kingdom, the daughter of the god Betala Guru. The princess recited the mantra *pulang pulih*, which means to revive Mastan Darman from his death. The same mantra was chanted by Betala Guru to revive the dead body of the prince Raja Muda in the story *Putri Timun Muda* in his quest in the jungle. The mantra *pulang pulih*, in these scenes, represents the magical power and the intervention of divine power to human life. From the technical aspect of the play, it is the magical words that push the story’s plot after the death of the protagonist. Without the mantra, the story would end presumably, but it did not, as Betala Guru chanted:

*Pulang pulih, pulang pulih sedie kale, sedie kale*  
*Aku nak pulih, aku nak pulih anak cucu kami, anak cucu kami*  
*Asal sirih, asal sirih pulang ke gagang, pulang ke gagang*  
*Asal pinang, asal pinang pulang ke tampuk, pulang ke tampuk*  
*Asal kapur, asal kapur pulang ke kulit, pulang ke kulit*  
*Asal gambir, asal gambir pulang ke getah, pulang ke getah*  
*Asal tembakau, asal tembakau pulang ke daun, pulang ke daun*  
*Aku nak renjis, aku nak renjis air pancuran gading, pancuran gading*  
*Renjis pertama, renjis pertama terus bergerak, terus bergerak*  
*Renjis kedua, renjis kedua terus meresin, terus meresin*  
*Renjis ketiga, renjis ketiga teruslah duduk, teruslah duduk*  
*Renjis keempat, renjis keempat terus berdiri, terus berdiri*  
*Renjis kelima, renjis kelima pulih kembali, pulih kembali*

The whole part of the mantra is recited like a song. In my conversation with Pak Gani at his home, I listened to him telling mak yong stories in a narrative way. However, he dramatised several dialogues with impersonation and sang some songs and the mantra *pulang pulih*. Two live performances of *Putri Timun Muda* stories, in which the mantra should have been sung, did not perform that scene due to the shortened time allotted for the performance. However, Pak Gani’s storytelling made the context of the mantra’s recitation clear. Betala Guru declared that he wanted to revive (*pulih*) the human body as a creature that he calls “descendants” (*anak cucu kami*). This revival is done with allusions to betel leaf (*sirih*) that return to its stem. The other four materials also return back to their original state, including areca-nut (*pinang*) returning to its cluster, lime (*kapur*) returning to its peel, gambier returning to sap of leaves, and tobacco returning to a leaf. The body is revived gradually in five stages: moving (*bergerak*), sneezing (*meresin*), sitting (*duduk*), standing up (*berdiri*), and finally coming back to life (*pulih kembali*). With this mantra, Betala Guru is executing these actions in words,



including sprinkling water (*renjis*) on the dead body five times. In this sense, the recitation of the mantra is performative and represents the power of magical words.

If the magical words of the above mantra represent divine power, the king's words are a command, *titah perintah*, that moves the plot. The king or prince says a *titah*, and his attendant, Awang Pengasuh, executes it. Words drive the plot forward, which is, in turn, embellished by music and dancing. The king's order is the reason for the call for undertakings. Awang Pengasuh executes every single command ordered by the king or passes on the king's orders to another person. Below are a few examples of the king's imperative words that I have taken from various stage performances:

CIK WANG: "...Awang, the reason for my call this morning is that I wish for you to go to Balai Anjung and meet the queen. Awang, deliver my message and tell her to prepare delicious food!

AWANG PENGASUH: "...alright then, Cik Wang. If that is your order, please don't worry. I will take care of it by myself."

CIK WANG: "...Sebab saya pagi-pagi panggil Awang, saya nak titahkan Awang pe(r)gi ke Balai Anjung menghadap permaisuri saya Awang! Katekan pade permaisuri saye Awang, suruh die siapkan hidangan yang lezat-lezat Awang!"

AWANG PENGASUH: "Baiklah Cik Wang, kalau begitu sudah titah Cik Wang pada patik, ku. Kalau begitu sile Cik Wang besenang, ku. Bia(r) patik bejalan sendiri seorang senyawe."<sup>23</sup>

CIK WANG: "If this is your suggestion, I instruct you to summon Wak Perambun to my presence, Awang!"

AWANG PENGASUH: "When would you like for this to happen, Cik Wang?"

CIK WANG: "Right now, Awang! Go, hurry!

CIK WANG: "Kalau begitu Awang, saya titah perintahkan Awang untuk mencari Wak Perambun menghadap saye ya Awang!"

AWANG PENGASUH: "Bile jam Cik Wang?"

Cik Wang: "Ini jam juga ya Awang, lekas Awang!"<sup>24</sup>

The above dialogue shows the king's order to his attendant. In the first case, Awang executes the *titah* to meet with the queen and convey the king's message. Yet in the second case, the king orders Awang Pengasuh to summon Wak Perambun, whom the king appointed for a certain quest in the forest. It is the king's command that drives the episodes and changes the settings. Songs and dances illustrate the process of move. The performers sing, dance, and walk circles around the stage, which indicates traveling. It could be a long-distance trip (*bejalan jauh*), a journey by a single person (*bejalan seorang senyawe*), or a journey of several people together (*bejalan berih ramai*). The travel could be done by walking or running. An individual character who travels has to speak his or her intention to start the journey, which is *bejalan selalu cik oi* or *berlari selalu cik oi*. In these

<sup>23</sup> *Putri Timun Muda* performance by Sanggar Bungsu Sakti from Mantang Island at Festival Teater Bintan, Kijang 26 August 2017. See the inconsistency of using *-a* ending in Cik Wang's utterances, in which the */-e/* ending infiltrates in pronunciation: *saya* is followed by *saye*.

<sup>24</sup> Wak Perambun performance by Yayasan Konservatori Seni from Tanjung Pinang at Festival Bahari Kepri in Tanjung Pinang 15 October 2017. In addition, see also the inconsistency in Cik Wang's utterance as the same case like the above dialogue by Sanggar Bungsu Sakti.

sentences, *selalu* means immediately, in one time, which is the style in the northern part of the Malay Peninsula.<sup>25</sup> Mek mulung, a theatre form found in Kedah, also uses this word in the same context as mak yong. In mak yong performance, the performers also have to declare the arrival with a formulaic sentence, *kira bicara cik oi* or *berenti selalu cik oi*, meaning stop immediately. Either *kira bicara* or *berenti selalu* designate an arrival in which dialogues will start again in a different setting or place.

Unlike dialogue in bangsawan performance—which is more serious, stylised, and careful in following court etiquette—dialogues in mak yong play with words. Besides the language dialect that emphasises a distinctive aspect of cultural identity, the dialogues are more colloquial and play with words to make jokes. Several jokes have become a repetitive formula and have occurred in performances as far back as video and audio recordings documenting performances since 1975. Two chosen examples below reveal the use of recurrent jokes, which are from the 1975 (left-hand side) and the 2017 (right-hand side) performances.

CIK WANG: “Why did you strike me, Awang? Where are your eyes? Are you blind?”

“Even though I stood here like a coconut tree, you still bump into me!”

AWANG PENGASUH: “If you knew that you were blocking my way, why didn’t you move aside a little bit?”

CIK WANG: “Very well. But why did you follow me? Whether I moved to the right or stepped to the left, you followed me.”

“You do want your wife to be irritated!”

“Now take a close look at who I am, Awang!”

AWANG PENGASUH: “Why didn’t you tell me that’s all you wanted. Here you are acting like a hen protecting her chicks.

CIK WANG: “*Langga(r)-langga(r) saya, iya Awang? Kemana pegi matamu Awang? Buta sangat Awang? Jeruluh sangat Awang?*”

“*Saya macam batang nyio(r) sebiji, batang kelapa sebiji Awang nak langga(r) pada saya Awang ya!*”

AWANG PENGASUH: “*Udah tau saya*

CIK WANG: “O Awang, are you blind, are your eyes defective? Even though I stood here like an island, you didn’t see me at all!”

AWANG PENGASUH: “Didn’t I tell you to move aside? You knew I wanted to pass, I wanted to squeeze by.”

“What is it that you want if you knew already but do not want to move aside? You are like a spear in a pawn-shop.

“Do you think that you are beautiful? Let me see your face.”

“Buéééh!”

CIK WANG: “O Awang, please take a close look at who I am, Awang!”

AWANG PENGASUH: “Huh! Why didn’t you tell me? Why are you whacking me like a hen protecting her small chicks?”

CIK WANG: “*Amboi Awang mate bute, mater jerisip, jual beli, tolak raéh, saye macam pulau sebiji pun Awang tak nampak ya Awang!*”

AWANG PENGASUH: “*Oi kan Awang dah cakap, Cik sempang tepi-tepi, Awang nak merojoi, Awang nak*

<sup>25</sup> Raja Ali Haji also uses this word in one of his letters to Von de Wall. Jan van der Putten and Al Azhar indicate that RAH had been influenced by his teacher in Mecca Syekh Daud bin Abdullah al-Patani (Van der Putten and Al Azhar 1995: 65,164).

*nak melangga(r) kenapa Cik tak tau bekisa(r) badan, simpang lah tepi-tepi sikit!"*

CIK WANG: "O gitu Awang, saya sudah simpang kiri Awang ikut ke kiri, saya simpang kanan Awang ikut simpang kanan."

"Memang memang Awang nak mencari istri sakit Awang."

"Tapa mu kenal dengan saya Awang!"

AWANG PENGASUH: "Kabalah mintak kenal, ini tidak, macam ayam beranak kecil lepak lepak lepak lepak."<sup>26</sup>

*melengse(r).*

*Ini tidak, lah tau orang nak meghejuk, tak nak bekisa(r) badan, macam lembing kena gadai.*

*Engkaulah yang cantik, engkau lah yang lawe. Mane muke Cik? Hachuih!"*

CIK WANG: "Awang ya Awang, silelah Awang kenalkan saye ya Awang!"

AWANG PENGASUH: "Ha, kabalah mintak kenal, ini tidak, lepak lepak lepak lepak macam ayam beranak kecil saje."<sup>27</sup>

These jokes occur in every performance. The context for the above jokes is that Awang is leaving his hut and bumps into the king. Then the king (Cik Wang) canes Awang with his stick while verbally accosting Awang with words such as blind (*buta*), defective eyes (*jerisip*, *jeruluh*) that did not see a person standing like an island or like a coconut tree (*macam pulau sebijik*, *macam nyio sebijik*). Awang replied to the scolding by saying that if the king saw that Awang would bump into him, why did he not move aside. In Awang's eyes, the king looks awkward and powerless like a spear in a pawnshop (*lembing kena gadai*), referring to a Malay metaphor. Seeing that Awang did not know who he was quarrelling with, the king asked Awang to take a good look at him (*kenalkan saya!*). However, Awang replied with a joke, asking why he didn't simply say he wanted to be checked out, instead of getting mad like a hen looking after her chicks (*ayam beranak kecil*).

Some audience members may find the jokes to be boring. However, the context of the performance and the stage act of different performers could make them unique. Additionally, different audiences respond at different levels of enthusiasm. Take the case of YKS's performances on 15 October 2017 in Tanjung Pinang and on 23 November in the same year in Daik, Lingga. In these two performances, I compare the prelude stage in which Cik Wang quarreled with Awang Pengasuh as in the above quote. I found that people in Tanjung Pinang reacted less enthusiastically than those in Daik, Lingga. One of the reasons is the arrangement of the performance space (stage, audience, and the distance between them). Festival Bahari Kepri in Tanjung Pinang provided a proscenium stage for the performance, while YKS used an arena stage at Festival Tamadun Melayu in Daik. However, the jokes themselves have certain effects on the audience, in which I found different responses between the two. My interlocutor, Al Mukhlis, who acted as both Awang Pengasuh and Inang Pengasuh (these two different characters

<sup>26</sup> Wak Perambun story performed by a *mak yong* troupe of Mantang Island representing Riau Province in Taman Ismail Marzuki, Jakarta 1975. The transcription I have made from an audio recording by Ernst Heins kept in Leiden University Library, CD 1681 EH-189.

<sup>27</sup> Wak Perambun story performed by Yayasan Konservatori Seni at Festival Bahari Kepri in Tanjung Pinang, 15 October 2017.

were played by wearing different masks and dresses), revealed that the audience's responses at the performance in Daik were of great importance to him. He felt cheerful when the audience replied to his jokes with thunderous laughter, which stimulated him to confidently deliver more jokes. This made Mukhlis' comical acting more delightful for the audience to react and comment upon.

As the philological edition shows (Chapter 5), the performance is shaped by the stage acts and the audience's responses. Technically, the performers act as a storyteller or a narrator talking to the audience. Formulaic phrases start the narration followed by the character's self-introduction to the audience and their positions.

CIK WANG: "Hello, it has been a long trip, but I've just arrived at the front yard of Awang's hut."

MUALIM: "Hello, my name is Mualim. Now my task is navigating this ship."

Wak Pakih Jenang: "Hello, my name is Wak Pakih Jenang. I am now tending to my sheep here in this field."

CIK WANG: "*Baéklah, berape lame setengah umo(r) saye bejalan, saye sudah pun sampai di laman pondok Awang.*"

MUALIM: "*Baéklah, pade waktu ketike ini, akulah yang bernama Mualim, yang menjage kapal besar ini.*"

WAK PAKIH JENANG: "*Baéklah, pade waktu ketike ini, sayelah yang bernama Wak Pakih Jenang. Baéklah, saye ni nak nengók kambing-kambing saye dulu.*"<sup>28</sup>

The above utterances are chosen with consideration to the audience to which they are addressed. The audience finds that the emergence of a character followed by the narrator's utterance is attractive. Then the acting begins. Repeatedly the performers remind the audience about the storyline throughout the performance. Repetition in a different motif, characters, and settings will not be excessive, rather, they will be useful to keep the audience and the performers engaged in the storyline. An example from the play of *Wak Perambun* performed by YKS at Festival Bahari Kepri on 15 October 2017 illuminated such repetition. After realising that she was pregnant, Queen Nang Kanom relates to her husband Raja Peran Situn that she is craving to eat the meat of a white deer, which is in its first pregnancy, whose parents are the eldest among their siblings, and living in the oldest forest. As the story goes, the king told Awang about his wife's cravings and commanded Awang to call Wak Perambun. Then the king ordered Wak Perambun to look for such a deer by repeating the details of the desired deer. Departing to the forest from his home, Wak Perambun told his wife about his task to look for such a deer. In the forest, he met with the dragon Naga Berma Sakti, told his task to it, and asked for help. The repetition in this story has been made in dialogue to keep the audience on track with the storyline.

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<sup>28</sup> These storyteller utterances have been chosen arbitrarily from many dialogues in Chapter 5.

In the performance, the audience is involved in creating the ambience of the event. Direct responses—such as laughs, chatter, and loud comments towards performers—are significant for the performers and the whole atmosphere of the performance. The performers can also provoke a certain response from audiences by asking them directly and getting them involved in a fourth-wall dialogue. However, the other noises or doings of the audience that are not directly connected to the play also contribute to creating a certain atmosphere. I pointed this out to the performers when reviewing a video recording. They considered those doings to be positive as it made the performance clamorous. It meant that the audience was moving around the stage (more freely around the arena stage), chattering with friends, taking photographs or videos of the performance, and the likes. Spatial arrangement around the stage gives space for the audience and passersby to engage in these behaviours (figures 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4). The performers feel that this kind of circumstance makes the event lively (*meriah*), which then stimulates their own enthusiasm.

It is the audiences with their noise and various responses that create a sense of occasion. They come with expectations, as I found at Daik's Festival Tamadun Melayu, where people came to see the mak yong performance with the expectation of being entertained. I noticed that a high-ranking government official and his wife sat in the front row of the performance. Said Parman pointed out that this official had previously enthused to him: "I came here as I can't wait to see mak yong." At the moment of the performance, most in the audience were engaged with every phase of the play and responded immediately to the funny jokes and gestures. In this respect, the audience did not merely respond to what was happening on the stage, but rather, they were performing their laughter, comments, and cheers with the performers. Both sides—the audience and the performers—perform to encourage each other during the performance. Even though the performance began an hour late, which was at nine in the evening, most of the audience stayed around the stage until the event was about to finish at eleven-thirty at night. The significance of the audience's responses is obvious when one-third of them were leaving at 11:05 pm (when the performance had already taken place for two hours), in which the performers changed their plan and speeded up their performance (see pp. 206–9). One day after the event, I had a conversation with a handful of people in Daik for their review on the performance of mak yong. In this discussion, they found that the performance as a pleasing with a great hilarity.

The acting and audience response (as mentioned above) are possible only if the communication between the two sides goes well. This means that the audience understands the symbols that mediate communication. The use of a host of symbols (specific terms for goods, acts, situations, places, creatures, etc.) as a means of communication creates at the same time a concrete image of what is considered as Malay. The employment of the symbols can encourage the use of them in peoples' daily lives as the audience finds it attractive and imitable. In the discussion with the audience members in Daik above, they accounted that the abundance of people

made the atmosphere lively. Part of the audience members, who came from villages around Daik, was amused by the mak yong performance and especially with Awang Pengasuh's jokes. The review of the performance in Daik indicated that the audience members felt teased to use in daily life the jokes and terms or idioms that the performers spoke out with the local Malay dialect. In addition, some cases that I pointed out in Chapter 1 show how two little girls danced and sang, imitating a mak yong performance in daily life. In practitioners' families (Pak Gani, Satar, and Said Parman), the style of dialogue in mak yong becomes everyday practices in their domestic lives. These indicate how mak yong's symbols have been habituated in everyday life. Al Mukhlis admitted that through mak yong performance he learned about the character of Awang Pengasuh (gestures, ways of thinking and of talking, loyalty), which he had taken to become his character in real life. In a conversation on Penyengat Island, he told me that

It greatly shapes my life. In mak yong performances I act as Awang Pengasuh. His character is comical, the king's attendant, the king's servant, but he is the only person who can joke with the king, who can talk casually with the king.... Awang's position in the play is one of an idealist. Although he is accomplished and smart, he does not want to become rich. So he remains poor, but he obeys and executes every single command of the king. He dresses modestly, in trousers and a white and worn-out T-shirt, with a sarong like a man on surveillance at night.... This is Awang, this is his character! So these processes shape me, in a way that now I don't care about luxury. If someone else shows his or her luxury, I will appreciate it and am pleased with other people's achievements. So I have been shaped to become humble, and so I feel very happy every day. I get used to showing Awang's gesture with shaky hands sometimes in my daily life.<sup>29</sup>

The quoted interview with Mukhlis above reveals how the performance creates an image of Awang, which he internalises to shape himself in everyday life. In this sense, mak yong concretises an iconic image, which then has been considered as the Malay-self in epitomising traditional values of personal characters. Mak yong stories themselves as a whole are creating some of the imagery of the Malay cultural realm. The performance as a periodic event, in this regard, is regularising the above imagery to be internalised, be attached to certain feelings, and become an identity. I would argue that through the process of regularisation, people get used to a certain way of talking, behaving, and get to view their lives from the fictional story to make meaning.

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<sup>29</sup> Translated from the original utterance transcribed from an interview with Al Mukhlis on Penyengat Island, 6 September 2018: "Sangat, sangat membentuk. Jadi dalam pementasan mak yong itu kan saya menjadi Awang. Awang yang dalam ciri khas penokohnya sebagai orang yang kocak, anak buah kaki tangan raja, tapi dialah orang yang bisa bergurau dengan raja, yang bisa berbicara bebas dengan raja (...). Awang ini dalam posisi naskah itu adalah orang yang sangat idealis. Hebat pun dia, pandai pun dia, dikasi harta pun dia tidak mau, jadi biarlah dia miskin, tapi segala titah perintah kerajaan di lakukan. Jadi ya dengan pakaian yang seadanya Awang, dengan celana kurung, baju putih polos, dengan leher yang agak keluar, terus dia lipat kain macam orang mau ronda (...). Inilah Awang, inilah karakter Awang! Jadi dari proses itulah terbentuk. Terbentuk bahwa sekarang saya merasa tidak peduli dengan suatu hal yang wah wah, kalau orang begini begitu ya kita apresiasi, ada rasa kebanggaan ketika orang lain besar, sukses. Jadi jiwa kerendahan hati itu mulai terbentuk, mulai terbentuk, jadi agak senang aja bawaan setiap hari. Jadi adalah gelagat-gelagat Awang dengan tangan-tangan bergetarnya kadang-kadang (...)"

## Chapter 5

### **The young magical prince: a philological analysis of the performance of the mak yong play *Raja Bungsu Sakti***

Ritual and performance mediate the processes of either situational adjustment or regularisation (Moore 1975: 234-35). In previous chapters, I have shown that mak yong revival and performance have intertwined the processes of heritage-making and identity formation. In Chapter 4, I discussed the arrangement of a performance, the engagement of audiences, and their interaction with performers that construct the stage performance of mak yong. The chapter shows how symbols work from the perspective of “ritual process,” which analyses and contextualises mak yong in the sociopolitical context of the Riau Islands. As the chapter shows, mak yong supports the process of regularisation of the image of a Malay self, symbols, values, and meanings. What underlies such a process and makes the art form possible to contribute to it? The anthropological approach has a technical limitation in elaborating further the work of every single unit of symbol in the stage performance, especially the “processual symbolic analysis” in dealing with phonemes, syllables, words, jokes, gestures, and dance movements. Trying to overcome the limitation and taking into consideration the importance of words, I apply the philological approach to view the performance event as an object of philology, specifically performance philology.

Performance philology refers to an approach based on philological principles to analyse performance. Bernard Arps (2016) demonstrated the way philology applies to the study of performance in his work on the Javanese shadow-puppet play, *Tall Tree, Nest of the Wind*. He expanded the reach of the philological practices from textual studies as “the discipline of making sense of texts” (Pollock 2009: 934) or “a historical text curatorship” and an “interest and fascination with words” (Gumbrecht 2003: 3) to investigate an event, a non-textual and multimodal live performance with philological sensibility to help understand the way a performance works in narrative worldmaking. The play he chose is an emblematic tale in the tradition of the Javanese shadow-puppet theatre genre titled *Dewa Ruci*. Basing his assumptions on textual philology’s principles, Arps employed them to performance to ascertain if it can be considered a philological object, which is artefactual, interpretable, intertextual, contextual, and historical (Arps 2016: 41). Referring to the philology of performance, this chapter elaborates the way I deal with mak yong as a philological object.

Following Arps (2016: 43-62), I examine mak yong theatre with the above philological principles and make an edition from a performance I viewed and recorded. In textual philology, text is looked upon as a human creation, an artefact, even though as Arps points out in the European biblical tradition, it is inspired by considering text as divine revelation. Like the artefactuality of text in philology, the principle applies to performance, which has another kind of materiality and artefactuality as an emergent, transient, interactive, and multimodal text. Dealing

with the artefact, philology focuses its attention to mediate, represent, and edit texts to make them interpretable and comprehensible. Performance philology, in this sense, represents the experience and understanding during and after the performance, which becomes the basis of interpretation to mediate the text to the reading public. In mak yong's case, I represent the performance of the art form and my interpretation to the reading public based on the experience and understanding to the art form, its particular context, and the process of performance, in order to make it comprehensible.

Explanation and commentary that textual philology provides, is driven by a sensibility to trace the intertextuality of texts connecting them with other texts across time and space. However, performance philology expands it by taking into consideration the compositionality of its objects taking performable materials from everyday life, hearsay, news, popular and existing traditional genres. Other than the mak yong elements of dances, music, songs, and stories, other traditional genres such as pantun and Malay songs are existing materials for composition. The performers have also absorbed contemporary external materials to update their performance. An example in this chapter is a popular song taken from the 1999 Bollywood movie *Le gayi le gayi dil to pagal hai*, which has been reproduced and put on the online video platform YouTube.

The compositionality of performance reflects a certain context. The previous chapters show mak yong performance at cultural festivals that shed light on current cultural production and sociopolitical contexts related to the revival of the art form and Malay identity formation. Furthermore, this context also helps understand the performance. This is what I mean with contextuality of the text, which is a dialectic relation between text and context. Understanding mak yong performance is not only related to its current form, but also the factors or elements that are currently shaping the art form. In this respect, performance philology seeks to understand the elements and processes that lead to mak yong having its form or tracing its historicity.

Based on the above examination, I would argue that mak yong can be analysed as an object of performance philology. In the following section of this chapter, I present a philological edition of the mak yong play *Raja Bungsu Sakti* ("The young magical prince") performed and recorded in November 2017 in the Riau Islands. This edition contains explanatory commentaries and illustrations of non-textual aspects.

### **Making a philological edition of a performance**

The edition that I provide in this chapter is a performance of a mak yong play titled *Raja Bungsu Sakti*, which is also known as *Gunung Berintan*. The YKS-based mak yong troupe Mak Yong Muda Ledang Balai Tuan Habib performed the play at Festival Tamadun Melayu<sup>1</sup> in Daik, Lingga Island, on 23 November 2017. The

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<sup>1</sup> Perhelatan Memuliakan Tamadun Melayu Antarbangsa (PMTMA), 15-26 November 2017.



audience members at this event were local people of Lingga, those coming from other parts of the Riau Islands, guests from Singapore, Malaysia, and other parts of the Malay World. I recorded the performance at the event and transcribed it for this edition. I use Standard Malay to transcribe the utterances into text to be understood by academic or general readers. However, I retain some particularities that show aspects of locality, such as the local dialect with final /ə/ sound that I have transcribed into the letter <e>, instead of <a> as in Standard Malay spelling. The reason for this employment of the technique is to preserve this aspect that has become one of the concerns of the local government, activists, and performers in showing Malayness in the language use and distinguishing it from Indonesian through the emphasis on the final /ə/ sound. As a reference to understand the text better in this edition as it is transcribed from the performance, I give the guidelines of transcription to help grasp the peculiarities of the local speech variety and indicate certain characteristics of performance, including length of sound and volume of spoken text.

From the recordings of mak yong performances I have from festivals in the Riau Islands, I have selected one for this edition. *Raja Bungsu Sakti* is the longest story in the mak yong tradition in the Riau Islands compared to the other stories found in the region. The story tells about a prince named Raja Bungsu Sakti and his quest from the Kingdom of Lenggang Cahaya to Gunung Berintan to marry Princess Rencana Muda. However, the troupe performed a shortened version of the story due to the time restraints of the art festival. The performance of *Raja Bungsu Sakti* represents the creative work of the leader Yayasan Konservatori Seni, Said Parman, who recomposed the story to become an abridged version to be played in two and a half hours.

Since festival organisers in the Riau Islands divide the total duration for several groups of performers, mak yong troupes that are allotted only thirty to forty-five minutes cannot perform the story in its entirety. While two mak yong troupes from Mantang Island and Kijang cut the plays that they performed to adjust to the given duration, Said Parman condensed the stories rather than removing sections. I take into account his efforts to condense or change some part of the stories to fit with, and be able to speak in, the current context of stage performance. Examples of modified and condensed plays that I recorded from the performance of Said Parman's group are *Raja Bungsu Sakti* at Festival Tamadun Melayu in Lingga and *Wak Perambun*<sup>2</sup> at Festival Bahari Kepri in Tanjung Pinang.

I have chosen *Raja Bungsu Sakti* for this edition for several reasons. The performance of *Raja Bungsu Sakti* at Festival Tamadun Melayu in Lingga is more interactive than that of *Wak Perambun* in Tanjung Pinang. It is the arena stage set close to the audience that makes the communication between the performers and the audience more interactive from three sides (right, left, and front) than that of the proscenium stage at Festival Bahari Kepri in Tanjung Pinang. The performance

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<sup>2</sup> For further discussion and summary of the story of *Wak Perambun*, see Chapter 4.

of *Raja Bungsu Sakti*, therefore, provides an essential element that I want to show in my edition, which is the engagement of the audience in the performance lasting 136 minutes.

Unlike bangsawan plays with separate sections (*babak*) that constitute a performance, mak yong performances do not have clearly separated sections. However, the change from one setting to the other in mak yong is clearly marked by dance and music. I consider the setting in the story that contains a certain motif as the basis to divide episodes that makes up the whole story. Still, the sequence of the performance structure is also important to reflect on. Some important parts before the story begins require attention. In this edition I divide the performance into ten parts of dramatic episodes. The ten sections of the play are: 1) Giving respect to the audience; 2) Raja Bungsu Sakti's visit to Awang's house; 3) Raja Bungsu Sakti and Awang Pengasuh's inspection of harbour; 4) Retrieving heirlooms from Raja Bungsu Sakti's predecessor; 5) The quest of Raja Bungsu Sakti and the encounter with Putri Rencana Muda; 6) The capture of Raja Bungsu Sakti by Raja Johan Syah Nyaya; 7) The tiger's rampage in Gunung Berintan; 8) Raja Bungsu Sakti's triumph over the tiger and efforts to restore order; 9) Marriage of Raja Johan Syah Nyaya; 10) Closing dance and giving respect to the audience.

In this edition, every part begins with an explanation about the position of the current episode in the whole story and a description of the performer and audience in the play, such as the music ensemble, the position of actors, and the noise of the audience. To describe the performance as accurate as possible to the original performance and to consider the importance of audience response, I format this edition in three columns that separate the transcription text, the audience's response, and the commentaries. This format also aims to make it easier for readers who will find the performance text and audience response side by side with annotations on the same page following the move of the performance plot without any need to turn to other sections to find the annotation and back again. Below, I describe the details about the content of the columns.

In the left-hand column, I place commentaries about the verbal text of play as represented in the middle column to help make sense of the stage, the story world, and add context to reveal what the performers mean by their words, movements, and gestures. This column represents my position as a researcher who is familiar with the play and who looks for common ground with the reader by explaining certain elements of the story, performance, and giving additional references. The main middle column represents the dialogue of the play that is occurring on the stage, which is made from my transcription of the performance. Every single line or groups of lines in the column contains sentences that may comprise of song lyrics and utterances from the dialogue. Either a four-line set of lyrics or utterances by a single character are set in a group of lines in this column. I display song lyrics in centered text and dialogue in the left alignment. In addition, I put particular symbols in this edition to help illustrate musical accompaniment, sentence breaks, interrupted utterances, intonation, and vocal articulation.

In the right-hand column, I describe the audience response to the play, such as comments, laughter, shouts, and applause, which they intentionally show. Since particular response connects with the stage act, I describe performers' kinetics, such as gestures, movements of dance, and slapstick humour perceived to have stimulated responses. These details represent my view as an active member of the audience who scrutinises the stage and other people around me.

### Guidelines of transcription

The spelling and the phonetics that I use to represent the utterances of performers refers to standard Malay (Kassin 2000; Payne 1970:6–8) and the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). I present here only some additional symbols indicating peculiarities of the local variety of Malay in the mak yong performance.

#### Vowels

Symbol	Phonetic equivalent	Example
ê	/ɛ/	nênêk [nɛnɛk], ( <i>grandmother</i> )
é	/e/	boléh [boleɥ], ( <i>can, able to, allowed</i> ) baék [baeʔ], ( <i>back, to return</i> )
e	/ə/	enam [ənəm], ( <i>six</i> ); saye [sajə], ( <i>I</i> ) negeri [nəgəghɪ], ( <i>country, state, city</i> )
ô	/ɔ/	gôndang [gɔndʌŋ], ( <i>shell, conch</i> ) ômbak [ɔmbʌʔ], ( <i>wave</i> )
o	/o/	laot [laot], ( <i>sea</i> ); ikot [ikot], ( <i>to follow</i> )

#### Consonants

Symbol	Phonetic equivalent	Example
k	/k/ (non-final)	kaki [kʌkɪ], ( <i>foot, leg</i> )
	/ʔ/ (final)	kapal [kʌpʌl], ( <i>ship</i> ) cik [ciʔ], ( <i>madam, sir</i> ) baék [baeʔ], ( <i>good, fine, well</i> )
(r)	(no sound, final floating /r/)	baya(r) [bʌyʌ], ( <i>to pay</i> ) tido(r) [tido], ( <i>to sleep</i> )
r	/gh/ (non-rhotic /r/)	raib [ghʌib], ( <i>dissapeared, vanished</i> ) rambot [ghʌmbot], ( <i>hair</i> )

#### Note for inconsistencies

I am aware and notice some inconsistencies in the utterances, in which the performers unintentionally pronounce several words in the Indonesian variant in dialogue and then switch to the Malay language. Some examples for this inconsistency in pronouncing the final /r/ sound, which is sometimes rhotic (Indonesian) and sometimes floating (Malay), and final /ʌ/ and /ə/ pronounced interchangeably, such as *saya* and *saye*. For these cases, I made this note to clarify the inconsistencies found in the transcription in this edition. I affirm that I retain the inconsistency to make it as close as possible to the utterance, which is the original source.

### Symbols and typographic conventions

Some symbols that I use in this part refer to Arp's philological edition of the performance of shadow play (2016: 108-9). I retain several symbols and typographic conventions to make it in accordance with the previous work and create some other symbols that I need in this particular edition of the mak yong performance. This following list provides the symbols and their functions in the edition.

#### *Description of settings—stage and audience, music and nuance*

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| 1, 2, 3  | : | indicate the parts of the performance based on settings and/or particular motives of dramatic episodes.  |
| <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">The stage</div> | : | text in the box describes the stage, audience, music, transition, off stage information, and give a brief introduction of the acting.  |
| Left column  | : | commentary upon the verbal text.   |
| Middle column  | : | verbal text transcribed from the live performance.   |
| Right column   | : | descriptions of the audience response i.e applause, noise, and laughter related to the stage acts, and of the noticeable movements of the performers related to the responses. |

#### *Action, gesture, music, and song*

- |                 |   |  |
|-----------------|---|--|
| CIK WANG        | : | name of character is written in CAPITAL letters.   |
| <i>Laughing</i> | : | the description of the audience response (in the right column) is written in <i>italics</i> .                          |
| [he steps up]   | : | the description in square brackets (in the right column) explains action and gestures.                                 |
| •••             | : | gong sound in dialogue and action; number represents duration.   |
| ☒☒              | : | drum sound in dialogue and action; number represents duration.   |
| ☐☐              | : | the sound of a pair of small-horizontal gongs ( <i>mong-mong</i> ) in dialogue and action; number represents duration. |

#### *Pauses in speech and duration*

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| Baéklah,<br>kalau begitu<br>silelah Cik<br>bersenang<br>dulu. | : | line break indicates a pause in speech. The continuation by the same person is written starting from the left margin.<br>the continuing sentence of the speech of the same person is written with an indent. |
| «»  | : | marks a pause in speech and music, «» for 1-2 seconds, «»«» for 2-4 seconds, and «»«»«» for 4-6 seconds  |

#### *Intonation and vocal articulation in speech*

- |               |   |  |
|---------------|---|--|
| , ! ?         | : | indicates enumeration, imperative, and interrogative intonation. |
| Ambo—i        | : | shows a lengthening of the vowel in song and speech.             |
| ti~dak        | : | signifies a vibrating sound.                                     |
| betul-        | : | denotes a hesitation.  |
| sa-tu, du-a,  | : | signifies an articulation of emphasising every syllable.         |
| Begini Cik... | : | indicates an interrupted sentence.                               |

## 1. Giving respect to the audience

Troupe leader Said Parman prepares the arena stage in front of a proscenium stage that was already in place (figure 5.1). Two kerosene lamps hang down from wooden poles standing on the left- and right-hand side behind the stage. The audience sits on chairs close to the stage positioned on the right, left, and front sides. A large majority is standing or sitting on the ground. A master of ceremony on the proscenium stage introduces the play and the troupe, and then, the performers start the play. It is 09:08 at night. All performers enter the stage accompanied by music. Then, they sit in a half-circle formation. The prince, Cik Wang, sits in the centre of the formation. Behind Cik Wang, six musicians are sitting in a row from left to right, a pair of horizontal gongs (*mong-mong*), a pair of one-sided drums (*gedombak*), a pair of hung-horizontal gongs, a bamboo clarinet (*serunai*), a double-sided lead drum (*gendang pengibu*), and a double-sided accompanying drum (*gendang penganak*) player. A rebab player takes position on the front left-hand side of the stage facing the performers (figure 5.2). Cik Wang steps forward and sits face-to-face with the rebab player (figure 5.3). Three professional photographers take photos. Audience chats with each other. Many take photographs with their handphones. The first sequence, “respecting rebab” or *betabek* begins. The rebab player leads other musicians in accompanying the prelude song that Cik Wang sings.

*Guru tue* and *guru mude*: senior and young masters. These terms address human, supernatural beings, and spirits, who could either harm or help the performers. These ritual-like dances and songs aim to give respect (*tabek*) to the *guru* and ask for their favour to not disturb the performers.

*Guru jangan meninggal jaoh* expresses a request to the spirits to stay and protect the casts at the staging event.

*Anak dagang* (wanderer) refers to the performers to impress modesty and a low position to the audience.

*Lengka(r) bangun* is preparing to stand up like a coiled snake that starts slithering.

*Tapak lima* refers to the king’s gold nails showed in his dances symbolising glory and power.

Bongé—é o—i  
tabék hambe menjunjong tabék la—h  
guru tue— guru mu—de é—lo—i  
yo—ng dédé—é dédé—é

Bongé—é o—i  
tabék hambe menjunjong tabék la—h  
guru tue— guru mu—de é—lo—i  
yo—ng dédé—é dédé—é

Bongé—é o—i  
guru tue guru mude la—h  
guru janga—n meninggal ja—oh é—lo—i  
yo—ng dédé—é dédé—é

Bongé—é o—I  
guru tue guru mude la—h  
guru janga—n meninggal ja—oh é—lo—i  
yo—ng dédé—é dédé—é

Bongé—é o—i  
guru jangan meninggal jaoh la—h  
anak daga—ng nak lêngka(r) ba—ngun é—lo—i  
yo—ng dédé—é dédé—é

Bongé—é o—i  
guru jangan meninggal jaoh la—h  
anak daga—ng nak lêngka(r) ba—ngun é—lo—i  
yo—ng dédé—é dédé—é

Bongé—é o—i  
anak dagang nak lêngka(r) bangun la—h  
bangun berdiri— tapak li—me é—lo—i  
yo—ng dédé—é dédé—é

[Cik Wang sits cross-legged bearing the weight of body and arms. The palms raise towards the chest making a *sembah* (obeisance). Wrists rotate out and push the palms forward with the fingers upward. Chorus follows the lead]  
[Cik Wang makes a *sembah*, then sways the torso while swaying the right arm horizontally to the left side and the left arm to the right consecutively with the palms open pointing upward. Chorus follows the lead and Cik Wang repeats]

[Cik Wang’s body and both arms sway horizontally to the left and right sides consecutively. Then arms stretch out, sway, make a *sembah*, and push the palms forward. Chorus follows the lead, Cik Wang repeats]

[Cik Wang stretches and sways both arms, and stands up while singing with the gesture of the right arm at waist



Figure 5.1 The arena stage with a red mat. The audience seats are set close to the stage.



Figure 5.2 The formation of performers. Rebab player sits on the front-left side. Three young actors sit at the end of the right-hand side.



Figure 5.3 Menghadap Rebab.

*Waktu baék*: auspicious moment, in which *anak dagang* starts traveling.

*Awe*: Awang in Kelantanese dialect.

Cik Wang declares the absence of his attendant, *Awang Pengasuh*.

The dance and song expresses the king's intent to visit his attendant's house.

Cik Wang announces his travel to visit (*ziarah*) *Awang Pengasuh*.

Bongé—é o—i  
anak dagang nak lêngka(r) bangun la—h  
bangun berdiri— tapak li—me é—lo—i  
yo—ng dédé—é dédé—é

Di waktu baék é— lo—i  
waktu baék pria molék  
dagang bejalan lah Awa—ng  
yong dédé dédé—é

Awé—é o—i  
waktu baék pria molék la—h  
yong dédé dédé—é  
Awé—é o—i  
ilang kemane raib kemane  
Awang tidak bersama saye lah Awa—ng  
yong dédé dédé—é

Awé—é o—i  
ilang kemane raib kemane  
Awang tidak bersama saye lah Awa—ng  
yong dédé dédé—é

Nak ziarah Awang, Awang wé—

level, opening the palm pointing upward and the left arm holds the waist. Chorus follows singing. Cik Wang moves in circle pattern on the stage] [music becomes more dynamic. Cik Wang holds the above posture] *Cameras flash*

[Chorus follows singing. Cik Wang holds the gesture in the middle-bottom part of the stage and moves in a circular pattern]

[Cik Wang repeats the above movements]

[Chorus follows singing and swaying hand in a sitting position. Cik Wang repeats the above movements]

*Betabek* song and dance ends. The camera flashes hit the performers again and again. Cik Wang stops singing but keeps dancing, repeating several movements accompanied by music for four minutes. The movements imitate and/or represent power by showing nails (*tunjuk kuku*), rolling ship ropes (*menggulung tali*), flapping waist cloth (*tari kain sebai*), a bird (*burung undik-undik*), and python (*ular sawa*). Cik Wang drags about the feet horizontally to the left and right, while the arms alternately make movements of showing the nails (*canggai*) with an open palm pointing upward on the level of the diaphragm, while the other palm sways from left or right over the open palm. Then, Cik Wang moves eight steps forward, kneels, and imitates the movement of rolling up the ship ropes, which ends with a move back to the middle-bottom of the stage. Subsequently, Cik Wang steps in a circular pattern, which is interjected by shaking the hip and flapping his waist cloth. Once getting back to the middle-bottom of the stage, Cik Wang steps in a zig-zag pattern (like the slithering of a python) while walking in a circle before returning to the starting position. He does this with the arms raised to the level of his chest in which the right and left one alternately sway the palm from this position up to the level of the head. This solo dance symbolises the king's/prince's glory and power (nails), his duty and responsibility (rolling up ropes), joy in his travel, and his care by inspecting the countryside (zigzagging movement). Audience

keeps chatting with each other during this solo dance. Once finishing the dance, Cik Wang starts to sing again while dancing, which symbolises his journey to visit his attendant, Awang Pengasuh.

This stanza indicates the length of Cik Wang's travel and his longing to meet his servant, Awang Pengasuh.

Awé—é o—i  
berape lame saye bejalan  
Awang tidak besame saye lah Awa—ng  
yong dédé dédé—é

[Cik Wang sways his arms alternately from right and left to the front of diaphragm and rotates out the wrists and pushes the palms forward with the fingers upward. Chorus follows the lead in a sitting position]

The prince arrives at Awang's place, calls him, and wakes him from his sleep.

Awé—é o—i  
berape lame saye bejalan lah Awa—ng  
yong dédé dédé—é  
Awé—é o—i  
bangunlah Awang dengan segere lah Awa—ng  
yong dédé dédé—é

[The actor wearing mask acting as Awang Pengasuh steps to the middle of the stage, sits, and is ready to perform. Cik Wang repeats the movements and chorus follows the lead in a sitting position]

Different parts of a palm leaf are mentioned metaphorically referring to Awang's limbs that should unfold as a sign that he is waking up.

Awé—é o—i  
bangun pucok, bangun liok, bangun pelepah,  
bangun lenggang lah Awa—ng  
yong dédé dédé—é  
Awé—é o—i  
bangunlah Awang dengan segere lah Awa—ng  
yong dédé dédé—é

[Cik Wang moves four steps forward and touches Awang's shoulder, who then stands up dancing complementary with Cik Wang. Chorus follows the lead singing in a sitting position]

The music, singing, and dancing stop. The movement of touching Awang's shoulder is technically signalling that Awang is ready to perform. This also implies the arrival of the prince at Awang's house where he finds Awang asleep and so he wakes Awang up. This sequence lasts for 12 minutes, and then, the story begins.

## 2. Raja Bungu Sakti's visit to Awang's house

The prince stands in front of Awang Pengasuh's dilapidated hut. This episode contains a comical dispute between the prince and his attendant. It starts as the prince calls Awang to come out from his hut. Having just woken up, Awang insists to stay inside and asks his guest to come in. They quarrel and mock each other. This episode begins with the king's monologue—as a narrator—declaring his arrival. Audience chat is heard as the music stopped, but then, it changes to become the noise responding to action on the stage. This episode begins at 9:26 pm and lasts for 18 and a half minutes.

*Baéklah*: a formula that starts a narrator's speech and is used as an opener of the scene to attract audience's attention.

*Berape lame setengah umo(r)* indicates the length of Cik Wang's travel: half a lifetime.

CIK WANG: Baéklah, <>  
berape lame setengah umo(r) saye bejalan, saye sudah  
pun sampai di laman pondok Awang. <>  
Baéklah di sini tempat saye nak panggil Awang, nak  
sayu Awang, nak ajak Awang kire bicare. <>

Oh iya—lah mu Awang, Awang o—i! ●●●●●  
Oh iya—lah mu Awang, Awang o—i! ●●●●●

AWANG PENGASUH: hei, siapa tu?

[Awang gestures and gazes at the audience in a comical way]

*Audience laughs and some of them shout: 'O wang!', while others shout: 'parah Awang!'*

	CIK WANG: saye ya Awang!	
	AWANG PENGASUH: saye siapa Cik?	
<i>Lêdang Balai</i> : the king's and prince's audience hall in the royal palace.	CIK WANG: saye datang dari Lêdang Balai Awang.	
	AWANG PENGASUH: O—i Cik datang dari Lêdang Balai, kata—?	<i>Cameras flash</i>
	Masoklah Ci—k!	
	CIK WANG: amboi Awang, saye tak sempa—t ya Awang.	
	Sile—lah Awang kelua(r) ya Awang!	
<i>Pelawe</i> : to invite. <i>Aé(r) ketehe</i> and <i>aé(r) beladi kop</i> : (slang) unsweetened tea and coffee. The terms imply poorness, flavourless beverages, which should be sweetened with sugar or milk according to normal tastes.	AWANG PENGASUH: bukan begitu Cik, tiap-tiap orang yang datang tu mestilah kene pelawe, entah minum aé(r) ketéhé ke, •☒	
	minum aé(r) beladi kop! •☒	
	CIK WANG: ambo—i Awang, tak usahlah Awang baék budi baék bahase ya Awang. «»	
	Silelah Awang kelua(r) ya Awang!	
	AWANG PENGASUH: Cik masoklah dulu teratak Awang ni!	
<i>Teratak</i> : a small hut. There are many holes in its palm-leaf roof, from which one can see the stars in the sky ( <i>atap beterawatang bintang</i> ). The floor boards are not fixed together so if anyone steps on one end, the other end rises ( <i>lantai jongkat-jongkét</i> ).	CIK WANG: ambo—i Awang, macam mana saye nak masok ke teratakmu ya Awang. «»	
	Cobe Awang pandang ke atas, atapmu beterawatang bintang ya Awang. ☐☐☐☐•••••	<i>Cameras flash</i>
	Cobe Awang pandang ke bawah, lantaimu jongkat jongkét Awang, ☐☐☐☐•••••	
	pijak ujung pangkal menjongkét, pijak pangkal ujung menjongké—t Awang. ☐☐☐☐•••••	
<i>Gobék</i> : ramshackle. <i>Caw</i> (Indonesian slang): to leave, adopted from the exclamation <i>ciao</i> .	AWANG PENGASUH: amboi Ci—k, canték bahase, datang-datang bukan nak memuji, malah mengate mencaci pondok gobék Awang ni, huh.	<i>Cameras flash</i>
	Kalau Cik suka, Cik boléh masok, tapi kalau Cik tak suka, ini jam juga Cik boléh caw lah, •☒	<i>Laughing loudly</i>
	berambus sana!	
<i>Rejam</i> : to stone	CIK WANG: silelah Awang kelua(r) ya Awang! «»	<i>Cameras flash</i>
	Kalau Awang tak nak kelua(r) juga ku rejam rumah tanggamu dengan batu ya Awang!	
<i>Mata lua(r)</i> refers to the eyes of the mask that Awang wears. <i>Mata dalam</i> refers to the actor's own eyes.	AWANG PENGASUH: a—i, sedapnye Cik nak merejam rumah tangga Awang dengan batu. «»	
	Kalaulah kene mate lua(r) tak ape Cik, tapi kalaulah kene mate dalam, meraba—a Awang Ci—k Cik! ☐☐☐☐••	<i>Laughing</i>
	Awang tak nak kelua(r) Cik!	
	Awang banyak ke(r)ja!	
	CIK WANG: Ke(r)ja apa itu Awang?	





Figure 5.4 The audience sits on the front row of the right-hand side. Behind them a big crowd is standing.



Figure 5.5 Kids and cameramen sit on front side, opposite the stage. Adults are standing behind them.



Figure 5.6 The audience sits on the front row of the left-hand side.

*Tanggap*: a groove cut in the end of a board used to join and interlock it with another plank.

Awang's explanation of interlocking head and pillow, and closing eyes, metaphorically indicates that what he is doing is sleeping.

*Membute*: to sleep.

*Merojoi*, or *merojol* (Standard Malay): to emerge from a hole (Iskandar 1986:987).

*Melongso(r)*: to slide down (Wilkinson 1908:134).

*Melengse(r)*: to slide sideways (Wilkinson 1908:129).

*Terempoh*: to collide.

*Tegadoh*: to dash. Awang warns in a hyperbolic way if he possibly collides with Cik Wang. The prefix *ter-* indicates coincidental.

AWANG PENGASUH: tanggam-menanggam, rapat-merapat!

CIK WANG: tanggam-menanggam itu ape, rapat-merapat itu ape ya Awang?

AWANG PENGASUH: tanggam-menanggam tu, kepala dengan bantal. «»

Rapat-merapat tu, bijak mata Ci—k! ☐☐☐☐●●●

CIK WANG: ambo—i Awang!

Itu bukan ke(r)je tapi itu membute ya Awang!

AWANG PENGASUH: aa itulah ke(r)ja Awang.

*Chuckling*

CIK WANG: Awang ya Awang,

Sile—lah Awang kelua(r) ya Awang!

AWANG PENGASUH: o—i Cik suruh Awang kelua(r) juga, kata?

CIK WANG: Oh iya—lah mu Awang!

AWANG PENGASUH: Baéklah Cik, kalau begitu Cik simpang tepi-tepi, «»

Awang nak merojoi!

CIK WANG: Merojoi lah Awang!

AWANG PENGASUH: Awang nak melongso(r)! ☐☐●●●

CIK WANG: Melongso(r) lah Awang!

AWANG PENGASUH: Awang nak meléngsé(r)! ☐☐●●●

CIK WANG: Meléngsé(r) lah Awang!

AWANG PENGASUH: Kalau terempoh, tegadoh, jangan kate Awang bôngkak sômbông ye Cik.

CIK WANG: O iyalah mu Awang

AWANG PENGASUH: a—a ja—ge Cik!

Awang moves comically, and the audience chuckles while watching him. These movements illustrate Awang who is coming out from his hut. While waiting for Awang, Cik Wang dances, swaying his body

slowly with the left hand on his hip and the right one holding a rattan stick whose end is laid over his shoulder. Awang steps towards Cik Wang as if moving out from his hut and inevitably collides with him. Cik Wang, who feels obstructed, canes Awang with his stick, and they begin to quarrel.

*Jerisip*: slanted eyes, not open fully due to illness.  
*Tolak raéh, jual beli*: to buy and resell. *Mate t. r.:* (slang) an eye for the main chance in bargaining (Iskandar 1986:933; Wilkinson 1901:321)

*Merejuk*: to jump.  
*Lembing kena gadai*, lit. a spear in a pawnshop; looking awkward, stupefied or stunned (Iskandar 1986:304).  
*Puih*: exclamation of disgust.

Cik Wang's temper is likened to a hen caring for her chicks.

CIK WANG: Awang memang mate bute, ☒•  
 mate jerisip, ☒•  
 tolak raéh, ☒•  
 jual beli, ☒•  
 badan saye macam pulau sebiji pun Awang tak nampak ya Awang! ☒•

*Laughing*

AWANG PENGASUH: Kan Awang dah cakap tadi, Cik simpang lah tepi-tepi. <>>  
 Awang nak merojoi, Awang nak longso(r), Awang nak meléngsé(r). <>><>>  
 Ini tidak, dah tau Awang nak merejuk tak nak lalu bekisa(r) badan, macam lembing kena gadai! <>><>>  
 Kaulah yang lawa, kaulah yang cantik! <>>  
 Mandang muke Cik, puih! ☒•

*People shout at Awang.*

*Laughing.*

*Laughing loudly*

CIK WANG: Amboi Awang! ☒•  
 Awang melangga(r) sedap saje, kalau saya yang jatuh kan saya yang malu ya Awang, memang nampak engkau nak cari gadoh dengan saye ya Awang. <>>  
 Saye sémpang kiri Awang sémpang kiri, saye sémpang kanan Awang sémpang kanan.  
 Memang nampak engkau nak cari gadoh dengan saye ya Awang! ☒•

[A little girl performer scrawls back in fear as Awang approaches her wearing a red mask]  
*Roaring with laughter*

AWANG PENGASUH: Cik cari gadoh, atau Awang cari gadoh?

[Audience chats boisterously about the little girl performer]

CIK WANG: Awang cari gadoh!

AWANG PENGASUH: Tak nak, Cik cari gadoh!

*Laughing*

CIK WANG: Awang ya Awang, Silelah Awang kenalkan saye ya Awang!

AWANG PENGASUH: Wawawawa, Kaba(r)lah nak minta kenal, ini tidak, belepak belepak belepak belepak, macam ayam beranak kecil saje! Aa Cik!

*Laughing*  
*Cameras flash*

CIK WANG: oiyalah Awang.

AWANG PENGASUH: kalau betul nak mintak kenal, sekarang, Cik sémpang sebelah kiri sana!

CIK WANG: Sebelah mane ya Awang?

AWANG PENGASUH: Sana, dekat sana tu, aa!

CIK WANG: siapa saye ya Awang?

[Cik Wang steps to the front right-hand of stage. Awang steps closer comically to look him over carefully]

*Musang*: civet



Figure 5.7 Awang is inspecting with whom he is quarelling.

AWANG PENGASUH: Patut lah telo(r) ayam Awang ilang sekandang malam tadi!

*Laughing loudly.*

CIK WANG: ambo—i Awang, saya bukan musang ya Awang! ☒•

*Laughing loudly.*

AWANG PENGASUH: Ai mak, Cik bukan musang?

CIK WANG: Bukan ya Awang!

AWANG PENGASUH: Berarti Awang salah?

CIK WANG: Salah ya Awang!

AWANG PENGASUH: Yalah, kita ulang semula.

«»«»

Cik!

*Laughing*  
[Awang steps to the back part of the stage]

CIK WANG: O iyalah Awang.

AWANG PENGASUH: Sekarang Cik sémpang pulak sebelah kanan sana Cik! «»«»

[Cik Wang steps to the front left-hand of stage. Awang steps closer to inspect again to whom he is talking]

Gésé(r) sikit Cik, a—a!

CIK WANG: siapa saye ya Awang?

AWANG PENGASUH: O—i, kenal, ku! «»

Cik ni ade tige beradik, «»

Wak si Tongkang, ☒☒•

Wak si Kloneng, ☒☒•

kakak die Wak si Babi! ☒☒•

CIK WANG: Amboi Awang, «»

Saya bukan kakaknya si Babi ya Awang! •☒

*Laughing loudly*

AWANG PENGASUH: Salah lagi?

CIK WANG: Salah ya Awang!

AWANG PENGASUH: Cik bukan Wak si Babi? «»

Aa iyalah kalau gitu Cik, sekarang mari sini Cik ikot Awang ke belakang pulak. «»«»

Cik!

*Audience laughs and many chat with each other about Awang's stage act.*

CIK WANG: O iyalah Awang!

AWANG PENGASUH: Ke belakang la Cik, tak denga(r) kah orang cakap ni, belakang sini. «»

Aa sekarang Cik jalan ke depan pulak!

[Cik Wang and Awang move to back part of the stage]

CIK WANG: Berape langkah ya Awang?

AWANG PENGASUH: Tiga langkah!

[Cik Wang steps. Choir counts: sa-tu, du-a, ti-ga]

AWANG PENGASUH: tambah tiga langkah lagi Cik!

CIK WANG: Tige langkah lagi Awang?

AWANG PENGASUH: Tambah tiga lagi Cik, dekat sangat!

[Cik Wang steps. Choir: em-pat, li-ma, e-nam]

*Terawang*: see p.156.

Buk Vi is Elvi Lettriana,  
Said Parman's wife.  
Their daughter is acting  
as Cik Wang in this play.

This song "Le Gayi" is  
part of the Bollywood  
musical film *Dil To Pagal  
Hai*, released in October  
1999. A singer recently  
arranged this song and put  
it on YouTube.

*Pacal*: subject, servant.

Awang and Cik Wang are  
playing with words:  
*kelabu* (grey colour) and  
*kelambu* (mosquito-  
curtain).

*Pulot apét*: an exclamation  
of anger; sticky rice made  
usually as a dish in ritual  
ceremony.

*Bagai manik* [...]: like  
composed beads get  
broken up. *Bagai bemban*  
[..]: like unripe cherry.

AWANG PENGASUH: Awang nak kene terawang  
jauh dari sini Cik! «»

Ui nampak dari belakang anak macam anak Pak Said  
Parman. «»«»«»

□□□●●●●

Nampak dari model idung nampak macam anak Buk  
Vi ini. «»

Tapi Cik, Awang tak puas hati lah Cik, «»  
Cik boleh tak nyanyikan Awang satu lagu Cik?

CIK WANG: Lagu ape ya Awang?

AWANG PENGASUH: Lagu, «»«»  
Hindustan!

CIK WANG: Hindustan ya Awang?

AWANG PENGASUH: i—cepatlah sikit dah tak  
saba(r) lagi nak gini ni ah ah ah,  
cepat Cik ah!

Mujkho hui na khabar  
Chori chori chhup chhup kar  
Kab pyaar ki pehli nazar  
Hay  
Le gayee le gayee  
You le gayee le gayee  
Le gayee le gayee  
You Le gayee le gayee

CIK WANG: Ambo—i Awang,  
siape saye ya Awang? •

AWANG PENGASUH: Kenal, ku!  
Cik Wang, kata! «»  
Ya ampun beribu ampun Cik Wang.  
Patik mema—ng pacal yang hina!

CIK WANG: O iyalah Awang,  
Sudah dalam kita betutur kate, baru sekarang Awang  
kenalkan saye ya Awang.

AWANG PENGASUH: Maklumlah Cik Wa—ng,  
mate Awang ni kelabu.

CIK WANG: Ambo—i Awang, mane kelambu  
Awang, mane Awang?

AWANG PENGASUH: Pulot apét, bukan kelambu  
Cik Wa—ng!

CIK WANG: O—o kelabu, kata!

AWANG PENGASUH: Cik Wang, Cik Wang, «»  
hajat mana berita mana, macam manik lerai di karang,  
macam bemban masak muda, macam kaca  
terempas di batu. «»

*Chuckling*.

*Laughing loudly*.

*Laughing*

[Awang poses himself to  
dance but can't move his  
legs as music and song  
haven't started yet]  
*Roaring with laughter*

[Cik Wang sings an  
Indian song, while  
Awang is dancing  
comically following the  
drum beat]

*Laughing*

*Audience comments on  
Awang, who is struck by  
Cik Wang's rattan stick.*

*Cameras flash*

[Choir: ke-la-bu! ]

*Bagai kaca [..]:* like glass tossed on rocks. These metaphors imply a failure, unsuccessful effort, as Awang did not recognise Cik Wang and did not know about his visit.

The reasons for Awang being told to take a close look at Cik Wang is because he has just woken up and is not yet fully aware. Even after Awang recognizes him, Cik Wang's identity is still unknown until he declares it, by which the story begins.

*Jong korek:* dugout sampan. *Kemudi gé mang:* a cylindrical and short rudder. *Tekong:* name of an island. *Pekong:* ulcer. This song is a pantun as indicated by the rhyme.

This expression *timbang buruk badan kami* implies a submission to the king/prince as patron.

*Terubuk:* a fish, *Tenuialosa toli*.

Nonsensical explanation that aims only for effects of the comical and rhymed expression.

Cik Wang' abusive expressions.

Cube—lah Cik Wang bekaba(r) bilang dengan sebena(r), bolehlah budak Awang tau sama, ku. <>>  
Sebab budak Awang yang tue, letak ayah timang mak bunde dari kecil hingga ke besa(r), hingge jangké—t uban di atas kepala, ku! ☒•••••

CIK WANG: Tapa denga(r) denga(r) lah Awang saya bekaba(r) bilang ya Awang, sebab kalau saya tak kaba(r) bilang manalah boleh Awang tau sama. <>>  
Sebab Awang Pengasuh tue letak timang ayah mak bunde dari kecil hingga ke besa(r) hingge jangkét uban di atas kepala Awang.

AWANG PENGASUH:

Bongé—o—i,  
Jong korék kemudi gé mang  
Budak Lampong pegi ke Tekong  
Tuan cantik sengaje memang  
Selak kain nampak peko—ng.

[Awang sings this song—composed in the *pantun* form—and dances accompanied by music]

CIK WANG: ambo—i Awang,  
pekong siapa tu ya Awang? ☒•

AWANG PENGASUH: Aa, tak ade lah Cik Wang,  
Awang cakap pekong Awang seorang aje. <>>

Gadoh tuan di susah mana  
Belari-lari manggil Awang.

[Awang sings and dances with music]

dondang dondang donda—ng si donda—ng  
dondang dondang donda—ng si donda—ng

[Chorus follows]

e—e Cik  
timbang burok di badan kami

[Awang sings and dances with music]

dondang dondang donda—ng si donda—ng  
dondang dondang donda—ng si donda—ng

[Chorus follows]

CIK WANG: sembah ape tu ya Awang?

[Awang stops singing dancing by kneeling in front of Cik Wang]  
*Chuckling.*

AWANG PENGASUH: ☒• Sembah Terubuk serapoh!

CIK WANG: Ape maknenye ya Awang?

AWANG PENGASUH: Tekene dade, dade roboh,  
pegi rumah Tok Soh die bé—rak tak basoh,  
rumah die baru saje ro—boh. ☒•

*Laughing loudly.*

CIK WANG: Amboi Awang, mati dibunuh mati disula  
ya Awang! ☒•

*Laughing*

AWANG PENGASUH: Kaba(r), kaba(r), ku!



Figure 5.8 Semangat saya Awang. See further details in Chapter 4, p.127.

There is no indication of travel from Awang's teratak to Ledang Balai. But the context implies that they are at the palace. See Cik Wang's reply.

The declaration of the king's/price's identity and sovereignty indicates that the story begins.

*Baéklah*: formulaic word, see p.155.

*Negeri*: city-state, settlement, where the royal palace is located.

*Ramai*: many people, populous, which indicates prosperity. Ramai can also be associated with festive atmosphere, lively, and noisy.

Tanjung Buton is a coastal area in Daik, where the

CIK WANG:

Amboi ambo—i Awang é—é da—ng  
Donda—ng lah Awa—ng  
Amboi ambo—i Awang é—é lah saye  
semangat saye—e lah Awa—ng

Amboi ambo—i Awang é—é da—ng  
Donda—ng lah Awa—ng,  
Amboi ambo—i Awang é—é lah saye  
semangat saye—e lah Awa—ng

Kalau saye tak kaba(r)  
mana boleh Awang tau sama—  
karene Awang é—é lah saye,  
semangat saye—e lah Awa—ng

Amboi ambo—i Awang é—é da—ng  
Donda—ng lah Awa—ng,  
Amboi ambo—i Awang é—é lah saye  
semangat saye—e lah Awa—ng

Po—ng awang wé—

CIK WANG: Awang ya Awang,  
Awang denga(r) tidak saya bekaba(r) bilang ya  
Awang?

AWANG PENGASUH: Tak denga(r) Cik Wang,  
Lêdang Balai Cik Wang ni biséng sangat.

CIK WANG: Baéklah! «»  
Pade waktu ketike ini sayelah yang bernama Raje  
Bungsu Sakti, yang memerintah di negeri  
Lenggang Cahaye. «»  
Baéklah, sebab saye panggil Awang ke mari, saye  
hendak bertanye padamu ya Awang. «»  
Bagaimanakah keadaan negeri kita sekarang ya  
Awang? «»  
Adekah ramai ataupun tidak ya Awang?

AWANG PENGASUH: O—i, sebab itulah Cik Wang  
panggil Awang kemari, ku?

CIK WANG: O iya—lah mu Awang

AWANG PENGASUH: negeri kite ni, «»  
sangatlah baék ku, sangatlah ramai, ku!  
Ramai petang, ☒•  
ramai malam, ☒•  
ramai pagi, ku! ☒☒•••

CIK WANG: O iyalah Awang, «»  
kalau ramai petang macam mane ya Awang?

AWANG PENGASUH: Ramai petang tu Cik Wang,  
ramai lah orang-orang duduk kat Tanjung Buton,

[Cik Wang sings and dances, swaying his body and lays his stick on Awang's shoulder, who is bowing to him]

[Chorus follows the lead in a sitting position. Awang dances with shaky hands while bowing]

[Cik Wang sings and dances, swaying his body and lays his stick on Awang's shoulder, who is bowing to him]

[Chorus follows the lead singing in a sitting position]

*Cameras flash*

*Cameras flash*

government made an open space for people to relax and spend time in the afternoon with family and friends in the park and food stalls.

*Tesengih: to grin.*

*Ipong or ipung: a small green snake (Iskandar 1986:421). It may be related to green-coloured unripen coconut. This song is made in a pantun rhyme (a-b-a-b pattern) but some of its lines are repeated for an emphasis and lengthening it as if an eight-line pantun.*

Sarimie is a brand of instant noodle, known in particular promotion of two pieces of dry noodle in one package.

*Kantor tiang empat: lit. an 'office' on four poles,*

katenye Cik Wang, pemandangan die bagus,  
*sunset, a—a. <>*  
 Ade juga Cik Wang, orang nelayan balék dari laut,  
 budak-budak mangkah gaséng, main lelayang,  
 segale pemain lah Cik Wang.  
 CIK WANG: O iyalah Awang, kalau ramai malam tu  
 macam mana pulak ya Awang?  
 AWANG PENGASUH: Kalau ramai mala—m,  
 a—a, Cik Wang!  
 CIK WANG: o iyalah awang  
 AWANG PENGASUH: cube Cik Wang pandang tu—  
 dari belakang sane, bawa mate tu—u sampai ke  
 ujung sane Cik Wang, sane sikit, eh, tak ade. <>  
 Semue, tesengih-sengih nonton kite Cik Wang!  
 CIK WANG: O begitu, kata!  
 AWANG PENGASUH: a—a, malam ni Cik Wang,  
 ade yang spesial!  
 CIK WANG: Ape tu yang spesial ya Awang?  
 AWANG PENGASUH: Cik Wang nak tau juga, kata?  
 CIK WANG: O iyalah mu Awang  
 AWANG PENGASUH: baéklah Cik Wang, kalau  
 memang Cik Wang ni nak tau juge, <>  
 Sekarang Cik Wang denga(r) Cik Wang tengok ye,  
 Awang nak tarék suare dulu, <><>  
 ha—a, Cik Wang denga(r) ye, a—a  
 ipong ipong kela—pe mude  
 kelape mude— dibelah belah  
 kelape mude, kelape mude— dibelah belah  
 ipong ipong nak bebi—ni due  
 tak dapat yang mude, yang tue jadilah  
 ipong ipong nak bebi—ni due,  
 kalaulah dapat due duelah,  
 pong, pong, pong, pong, pong, pong  
 CIK WANG: ambo—i Awang, ape bende yang bini  
 due ya Awang?  
 AWANG PENGASUH: Tak ade la Cik Wang, Sarimie  
 isi dua.  
 CIK WANG: oh, Sarimie isi dua, kata. <><>  
 O iyalah Awang, kalau ramai pagi macam mana pulak  
 ya Awang?  
 AWANG PENGASUH: a—a, kalau ramai pagi ini Cik  
 Wang, <>  
 rama—i lah ibu-ibu pegi ke pasa(r), orang-orang tua

*Laughing*

*Cameras flash*

*Cameras flash*

*Chuckling*

*Laughing loudly*

*Laughing*

[Accompanied by music, Awang sings while dancing, imitating the movement of splitting apart a coconut shell]  
*Laughing*

[Awang runs in circles showing two fingers]  
*Laughing*  
 [Cik Wang canes Awang] *roaring with laughter*

*Laughing loudly*

*Comments on Awang not clear.*

*Cameras flash*

refers to a toilet erected on the shore or river.

pegí ke(r)ja, ade juga budak-budak pegí sekolah,  
ramai jugé Cik Wang orang orang kelua(r)-masuk  
kanto(r) tiang empa—t.

CIK WANG: kanto(r) ape tu ya Awang?

AWANG PENGASUH: Ha, Cik Wang nak tau juga,  
kata?

*Chuckling*

CIK WANG: Saye nak tau ya Awang!

AWANG PENGASUH: Tapi kalau Awang kasi tau,  
Cik Wang kene janji jangan marah, <>

The act of calling the audience by saying *penonton* to attract the audience's attention.

hm, penonton janji ye, <>

He—, baéklah kalau gitu Cik Wang, Cik Wang nak  
mintak tunjok sangat. <><><>

[Awang runs, jumps,  
and squats down as if on  
the toilet]

a—a ini die kanto(r) tiang empat Cik Wa—ng!

*Roaring with laughter*

CIK WANG: Ambo—i Awang, itu bukan kanto(r) tapi  
itu jamban ya Awang! ☒•

*Roaring with laughter*

*Tecirit*, from *cirit*: non-solid feces, often liquid, usually due to diarrhoea.

AWANG PENGASUH: Ala la la, tecirit sikit ha,  
kuning! <><>

*Roaring with laughter*

Cik Wang tanye, Awang jawab lah.

CIK WANG: Awang ya Awang, kalau begitu senang  
lah hati saya mendengar perkabaran darimu ya  
Awang.

AWANG PENGASUH: o iyalah Cik Wang, <>  
Awang tak senang, Awang kena lepak lepak.

*Roaring with laughter*

CIK WANG: O iyalah Awang, ada satu lagi yang  
hendak saye tanyekan padamu ya Awang.

AWANG PENGASUH: O iyalah Cik Wang, silelah  
tanye!

*Teruk*: severe (audience comment). This is audience's view on Awang who is seen exhausted due to his stage acts.

CIK WANG: Awang ya Awang, di manakah  
peninggalan ayah saya tatkala dahulu ya Awang,  
tempat bermain pedang, besabung ayam dan sepak  
rage ya Awang?

*Audience comments on:  
teruk Awang!*

AWANG PENGASUH: O iyalah Cik Wang, kalaulah  
begitu tanyenye Cik Wang, tentulah ade. <>  
Tapi seingat Awang, tempat tu dah jadi hutan Cik  
Wang, semak samun, banyak duri-duri Cik Wang.

*Cameras flash*

CIK WANG: Tak pe lah Awang, marilah kite kesane  
ya Awang.

*Cameras flash*

AWANG PENGASUH: i—h, Awang takut nanti Cik  
Wang kene duri.

CIK WANG: Tak pe Awang, pandai saye pakai sepatu  
ya Awang.

AWANG PENGASUH: ai, Cik Wang ade sepatu?



Awang leads Cik Wang to visit the field where Cik Wang's father played before he went missing.	<p>CIK WANG: Ade ya Awang!</p> <p>AWANG PENGASUH: ui, mêtêk ape tu? «» Aa iyelah Cik Wang, marilah kite pegi ke tengah padang. Cik Wang ikut same dengan Awang ye.</p> <p>CIK WANG: O iyelah Awang!</p>	<i>Cameras flash</i>
This song signals the change of setting with a travel to another place, which also indicates the end of this section.	<p>AWANG PENGASUH: A—a! é—é é lai silang bejalan bejalan ke tengah padang é—é é lai é—é é lai, silang bejalan bejalan ke tengah padang é—é é lai,</p>	<p>[Awang sings and both walk circling in a stylistic way accompanied by music]</p> <p>[Chorus follows the lead, singing in a sitting position]</p>
The travel indicates the end of this episode.	<p>AWANG PENGASUH: jalan selalu cik o—i</p>	[Awang stops singing but keeps walking, accompanied by music]

### 3. Raja Bungsu Sakti's and Awang Pengasuh's inspection of harbour

Cik Wang and Awang Pengasuh go to the field, which is the place where the former king Raja Gondang used to play various games: sword fighting, cockfighting, and Malay football (with a kind of rattan ball). They start their trip from Ledang Balai. In the play, music, song, and dance illustrate the travel, in which Cik Wang and Awang walk in circles on the stage in a stylistic way. The time is 9:44 pm, and this episode lasts for 24 minutes. This episode starts when Awang declares:

This is an indication that the journey is about to end.	<p>AWANG PENGASUH: é—é é lai sampai sudah padang di tengah padang é—é é lai, é—é é lai, sampai sudah padang di tengah padang é—é é lai,</p>	[Chorus follows Awang's lead]
<i>Berenti selalu</i> : the term that indicates that the journey ends.	<p>AWANG PENGASUH: berenti selalu Cik o—i!</p> <p>AWANG PENGASUH: Baéklah Cik Wang, nampaknye kite dah sampai di tengah padang ni Cik Wang. «»</p>	
<i>Semak-samun</i> : undergrowth.	<p>Betul kan ape yang Awang cakap, cubelah Cik Wang tengok tu ha, dah jadi hutan, semak-samun, banyak duri-duri Cik Wang.</p>	
<i>Kene or kena</i> : have to.	<p>CIK WANG: o iyelah Awang!</p> <p>AWANG PENGASUH: Cik Wang, kite jalan same, tapi Cik Wang kene hati-hati ye!</p> <p>CIK WANG: O iyelah Awang!</p> <p>AWANG PENGASUH: a—a, iyelah, mari Cik Wang! «»«»«»</p>	[they step forward as if to get closer to a

	Cik Wang, Cik Wang!	particular area in the field]
	CIK WANG: O iyalah Awang.	
	AWANG PENGASUH: Cubelah Cik Wang kemari Cik Wang! «»	
Bermain pedang: training in sword fighting.	Cik Wang, cubelah Cik Wang tengôk, ha, di tempat ni lah Cik Wang, tatkale dahulu, ayahande Cik Wang bermain pedang, ku.	Cameras flash
	CIK WANG: O di sini tempatnye ya Awang?	
	AWANG PENGASUH: O iyalah Cik Wang! Silelah Cik Wang tengôk dulu. «»«»«»	[Cik Wang observes the field]
	a—a, o iyalah Cik Wang, cubalah Cik Wang kemari Cik Wang, «»	
	Cik Wang, di sinilah tatkale dahulu ayahande Cik Wang Raja Gôndang bermain sabung ayam, ku!	Camera flash
Sabung ayam: cockfight. Raja Gôndang is accounted in the story of Anak Raja Gôndang (Sheppard 1974b:40–62), who was born from a huge snail (gôndang). He is the son of Raja Besar.	CIK WANG: Di sini tempatnya ya Awang?	
	AWANG PENGASUH: O iyalah Cik Wang! Cubalah Cik Wang tengok ade jejak kaki ayam situ ha! «»«»	Laughing [Cik Wang observes the field, which is said that Raja Gôndang used as the arena for cockfighting]
	A—a, yang ini satu lagi Cik Wang. «» Cik Wang, Cubelah Cik Wang kemari lagi! Cik Wang tengôk tak, tu— dekat atas bukit sana.	
	CIK WANG: Yang mana ya Awang?	
	AWANG PENGASUH: Itu Cik Wang!	Cameras flash
	CIK WANG: O yang itu ya Awang?	
Sepak raga: football with a ball made of rattan, like takraw ball.	AWANG PENGASUH: a— di sanalah tatkala dahulu ayahande Cik Wang bermain sepak raga, ku!	
	CIK WANG: Di situ tempatnya ya Awang?	
	AWANG PENGASUH: O iyalah Cik Wang! Hilang raib ke angkasa biru, ku. Hilang di mate raib di hati, hilang tak dapat dicari lagi.	
Raja Gôndang went missing mysteriously. In the other version of this story, Raja Gôndang is said to have gone missing during his quest for the fruit of <i>langkapura</i> for his wife because she has a craving to eat the fruit (Sheppard 1974a:2).	CIK WANG: O iyalah mu Awang! «»«»«»	[Cik Wang squats while pondering Awang's story]
	AWANG PENGASUH: O iyalah Cik Wang, kenapa dengan Cik Wang ni? «» Cik Wang, kenapa Cik Wang menangis?	Cameras flash
	CIK WANG: Saye teringat ayahande tatkala dahulu ya Awang.	
	AWANG PENGASUH: O iyalah Cik Wang, Awang mengerti bena(r) bagaimane perasaan Cik Wang. «»	
	Tapi Cik Wang, tak perlu lah Cik Wang gundah gulana, sekarang ni kerajaan di tangan Cik Wang. «»	
	Cik Wang, yang lalu bia(r) lah belalu!	

	Bia(r) lah menjadi kenangan, Cik Wang!	
	CIK WANG: Benar katemu ya Awang! «» O iyalah Awang, ade satu lagi yang hendak saye tanyekan pademu ya Awang!	
	AWANG PENGASUH: O iyalah Cik Wang!	
<i>Balai Peranginan</i> : a gazebo-like building made for relaxing.	CIK WANG: Awang, dimanekah tempat Balai Peranginan ayahande saye tatkala dahulu ya Awang?	<i>Cameras flash</i>
<i>Tepi laot</i> is associated with the name of a city park in Tanjung Pinang.	AWANG PENGASUH: O iyalah Cik Wang, kalau Balai Peranginan Cik Wang tentulah alah ade, «» ha, sekarang, marilah Cik Wang, «» die tu tempatnye dekat tepi jalan atau tepi laot, Cik Wang.	<i>Cameras flash</i>
	CIK WANG: Kalau begitu marilah kite ke sane ya Awang!	
<i>Bejalan selalu</i> : a formula that signifies the start of traveling.	AWANG PENGASUH: O iyalah Cik Wang, marilah Cik Wang ikut same dengan Awang, kite pegi ke Balai Peranginan. Bejalan selalu cik o—i!	<i>Cameras flash</i>
Awang leads Cik Wang to go to Balai Peranginan. They walk in circles on the stage accompanied by music. After one round, Awang Pengasuh announces their arrival.		
<i>Berenti selalu</i> signifies the arrival and is a signal for the musicians to stop.	AWANG PENGASUH: Berenti selalu cik o—i! «»«» Baéklah Cik Wang, «» kite sudah pun sampai di Balai Peranginan ayahande Cik Wang, Raje Gôndang.	[Cik Wang and Awang stop walking in a circular pattern]
	CIK WANG: Awang!	
	AWANG PENGASUH: O iyalah Cik Wang!	
	CIK WANG: Ape tu ya Awang?	
	AWANG PENGASUH: Yang mane Cik Wang?	
<i>Kayu-kayan</i> : wood, timber, a type of wood. <i>Rancang</i> : stuck to the ground vertically; pointing upwards.	CIK WANG: Itu Awang yang merancang-rancang macam kayu-kayan tu ya Awang.	
	AWANG PENGASUH: Yang ujung sane tu?	
	CIK WANG: O iyalah mu Awang!	
<i>Tongkang</i> : see p.159. <i>Wangkang</i> : a Chinese junk with a peculiar double figure-head (Wilkinson 1901: 679).	AWANG PENGASUH: O—i, itu bukanlah kayu-kayan Cik Wang! «» Itulah yang disebut orang kapal-kapal besa(r), tongkang wangkang, perahu-perahu besa(r) yang membawe dagangan dan berlabuh di negeri kite, ku!	
	CIK WANG: O begitu, kata?	
	AWANG PENGASUH: O iyalah Cik Wang!	

*Titah*: the utterance of a prince. (Wilkinson 1908:232). *Perintah*: command.

CIK WANG: Awang, kalau begitu saya ada satu titah perintah yang hendak saya berikan pademu ya Awang.

AWANG PENGASUH: O iyalah Cik Wang, silelah Cik Wang!

CIK WANG: Awang! «»

Awang pegi ke semue kapal besa(r)-besa(r) tu ya Awang, «»

tanyekan pade mereke dari mane hendak ke mane, nakhodanye siapa bermuatan ape, dan bandingkanlah negeri mane yang paling cantik antara negeri kite dengan negeri mereke ya Awang!

AWANG PENGASUH: O iyalah Cik Wang, kalau lah begitu titah perintah Cik Wang.

*Besenang angin besenang ômbak*: to take a rest, to relax.

Silelah Cik Wang besenang angin besenang ômbak di Lêdang Balai telebih dahulu. «»

Awang nak mōhōn ijin, memanggil Apék Kotak.

CIK WANG: O iyalah mu Awang!

[Cik Wang returns sitting on the middle-back part of the stage]

AWANG PENGASUH: Baéklah, pade waktu ketike ini, saye hendak menjalas menjalankan tugas daripade Cik Wang. «»

Apék is often used as a derogative name for any Chinese man.

*Kotak*: Chinese shoe-boat with lockers in the stern (Wilkinson 1902:408).

Saye hendak memanggil Apék Kotak, ha. «»

Apék Kotak ni, kalaulah tengah hari bute ni keje die pasti tido(r). «»

Tapi tak ape lah Awang panggil aje. «»«»

*Cameras flash*

Pé—k, o—o Pé—k! «» □□••

Kan, betul Awang cakap tido(r) la die ni, bute lah die ni, hm. «»

Apé—ék o—o Pé—k! □□••

Apék's accent changes /d/ sound becomes //, so *datang* sounds like *latang*. He does so hereinafter.

APÉK KOTAK: Haiya, siapa latang a— ?

*Laughing loudly*

AWANG PENGASUH: ini Awang la pék!

APÉK KOTAK: Awang Posoh?

Apék pronounces his name /Apêk/, while Awang calls him /Apék/.

AWANG PENGASUH: Mulot Apék, Awang Posoh, Awang Posoh! Awang Pengasoh!

*Cameras flash*

Apék omits /d/ and /h/ sounds, so he pronounces 'sudah' with 'sua'.

APÉK KOTAK: Haiya!

Awang aa, lu tengok Apêk aa, Apêk sua tua, Apêk sua sebut nama lu, nama lu susah sangat aa!

Apék set the wireless microphone improperly on his outfit.

AWANG PENGASUH: O—o ni *clip on* Apék salah.

*Laughing loudly*

APÉK KOTAK: Haiya!

AWANG PENGASUH: Pék! «»

Sekarang, Apék kene bantu Awang, bawa Awang tu pegi ke kapal-kapal sane?

*Cameras flash*

Apék pronounces /r/  
sound as //, besar sounds  
like besal  
/d/ is pronounced //

lui is to say *duit*: money.

APÉK KOTAK: Apék pegi kapal besar a?  
Layung sampan a?

AWANG PENGASUH: Layung pe layung lah!

APÉK KOTAK: ola ola ola.  
Awang a, bila jam kita mau layung sampan a?

AWANG PENGASUH: Ini jam juge, «»  
cepatlah Apék lekah ambék dayung Apék lame sangat!

APÉK KOTAK: Awang aa, lu duduk dalam sampan,  
Apék mau ambék layung dulu a!

AWANG PENGASUH: a iyelah, cepat sikit Pék!  
«»«»«»

Mane e sampan Apék ni? «»  
Oo ini merah banyak,  
oi nampak sampan Apék ini, uh.

APÉK KOTAK: haiya, lui lui lui haiya, «»  
bukan main lejekni Apék a!

AWANG PENGASUH: mane Apék ni lame sangat la!

APÉK KOTAK: Awang aa! «»  
lu duduk dalam sampan sapa?

AWANG PENGASUH: Sampan Apék lah!

APÉK KOTAK: Sampan Apék sini aa, bukan situ aa!

AWANG PENGASUH: Ini bukan sampan Apék?

APÉK KOTAK: Bukan lo, «»  
tengôk la!

AWANG PENGASUH: U—i kalaulah nampak orang  
malu lah Awang Pék Pék, «»  
Aa iyelah!

APÉK KOTAK: haiya, macam mana lu Awang aa, lu  
tengôk sampan sapa paling cantik aa?  
Sampan Apék Kôtak aa!

AWANG PENGASUH: Sampan belubang-lubang ni  
cantik?

Iyelah. «»«»  
Ha Pék cepat sikit Pék, kite pegi ke kapal satu sane  
dulu ye!

APÉK KOTAK: Ola ola lu lu diam diam jangan  
gôyang aa!

AWANG PENGASUH: ha!

APÉK KOTAK:

layung a—  
layung a—

[A technician interrupts  
to suggest Apék and  
Awang to not move too  
far forward so as not to  
disconnect their  
microphone with the  
wireless antenna].

[Apék walks slowly as  
an aged man. Then he  
takes his oars]  
*Laughing loudly.*  
*A comment: parah Apék  
ni, bile sampai?*  
[Awang jumps to a  
sampan]

[Apek returns back to  
Awang, who sits already  
on the canoe and is  
waiting for him]

[Awang moves to  
Apék's sampan]

*Cameras flash*

*Laughing*

*Cameras flash*

[Awang sits before  
Apék, who stands while  
rowing the sampan]

[The two circle the stage  
accompanied by music]  
*Roaring with laughter*

layung, layung  
layung, layung  
layung, layung  
layung mau pegi kapal besa(r)

AWANG PENGASUH: Ha Pék! «»  
Nampaknye kite dah sampai dekat kapal ni Pék.

APÉK KOTAK: Lu usah cakup lah, wa tau kita sudah sampai aa.

AWANG PENGASUH: Oi, kate rabun tadi. «»  
Aa iyelah Pek, sekarang Apek tunggu kat sampan ye,  
Awang nak naik kapal ni pulak!

APÉK KOTAK: Awang a, lu jangan lama lama a!

AWANG PENGASUH: ta—k, Apék tunggu aje lah,  
taulah Awang pekik nanti. «»«»  
□•

AWANG PENGASUH: kemane— ôrang kapal ni?  
□□•• «»«»«»

Wuih, Assalamu'alaikum!

CIK GAMÊT: Wala'aikum Salam!

AWANG PENGASUH: Cik, saye ni adelah orang dari  
darat yang dititahperintahkan tuan hambe saye  
untuk betanye sesuatu dengan Cik, boléh?

CIK GAMÊT: Boléh!

AWANG PENGASUH: Ha— Cik ni, siapa name, dari  
mane hendak ke mane, dan membawa muatan ape  
Cik?

CIK GAMÊT: Oh, name saya ni Cik Gamêt.

AWANG PENGASUH: Oi, Cik ni mane dudok  
agaknye, gamêk la ye?

CIK GAMÊT: Bukan begitu Cik, nama betulnya Cik  
Hamid, Gamêt tu panggilan je.

AWANG PENGASUH: O—h begitu kata!

CIK GAMÊT: Kami ini datang dari Pulau Karas,  
dagangan kami biskot bukét dengan mentega laot.

AWANG PENGASUH: biskot bukét, mentega laot? «»  
Cik, saye nak tanye sikit Cik,  
biskot bukét same mentega laot tu ape Cik?

CIK GAMÊT: Biskot bukét tu Jering, mentega laot tu  
mencalok!

AWANG PENGASUH: Ui sedapnye Cik, «»  
kalaulah makan dengan nasi panas, uh campo(r) kuah  
asam pedas, uh.

*Kat*: shortened version of  
*dekat* (near), and also a  
preposition for in, on, at.

*Pekik*: to shout.



Figure 5.10 Awang and the sailor Cik Gamet.

*Gamêt* or *gamit*: an act of  
poking with the finger(s)  
by someone to seduce  
someone else.

*Biskot bukét*: round  
cookies.

*Mentega laot*: lit.  
margarine made of sea  
animals. These are terms  
to make a joke.

*Jering*: smelly pods from a  
kind of tropical tree  
(species: *Pithecolobium*  
*lobatum*).

*Mencalok* or *cincalok*: a  
smelly relish made from



Figure 5.9 Apék is taking Awang to the anchored ships.

[Awang jumps as if  
moving out from Apék's  
canoe to the ship]

[A male cast stands up to  
start acting]

*Cameras flash*

*Laughing*

*Cameras flash*

small shrimps.

*Asam pedas*: spicy and sour fish soup.

*Kancing alas*: tax.

*Kote* or *kota*: the city of a king; a fort (Wilkinson 1908:115).

*Dusun*: orchard, a rural settlement, a countryside.

*PK*: *Paardenkracht* (Dutch) or horsepower.

*Jongkong*: a dugout boat.

CIK GAMÊT: Tuan hambe datang kemari ni hendak mungut kancing alas ke?

AWANG PENGASUH: Ei tidak Cik, kedatangan saye kemari ni, hanyelah dititahperintahkan Tuan hambe saye untuk betanye dan membandéngkan, yang manekah yang cantik molék, antare negeri Cik dengan negeri kami, Cik?

CIK GAMÊT: Sebenarnya kami bukanlah kote, cume dusun.

Jadi dibandingkan dari ujung kaki ke kepala, tak ada bandingannya dengan negeri Cik ni.

AWANG PENGASUH: O—i begitu kata! O iyalah Cik terime kaséh atas segale jawaban Cik, saye nak môhôn diri dulu ye Cik, ha. Assalamu'alaikum!

CIK GAMÊT: Wa'alaikum Salam!

AWANG PENGASUH: Pé—k! O—o Pé—k!

APÉK KOTAK: Tunggu kejam lo.

AWANG PENGASUH: tugas kite dekat kapal satu dah selesai, aa, «»

aa iye kite jalan lagi Pék! «»

Sekarang Apék kene anta(r) Awang tu dekat kapal besa(r) sane!

APÉK KOTAK: Kapal besal itu a?

AWANG PENGASUH: ha!

APÉK KOTAK: ola ola ola!

AWANG PENGASUH: Cepat sikit Pék é!

APÉK KOTAK: Sabal a, macam mana kalau kita pakai mesin Apêk a!

AWANG PENGASUH: Apék ade mesin?

APÉK KOTAK: Ada ha!

AWANG PENGASUH: Ngape tak cakap dari tadi?

APÉK KOTAK: Apêk punye mesin 50 PK aa!

AWANG PENGASUH: kapal macam jongkong macam gini mesin 50 PK?

Aa iyalah Pék, cepatlah sikit! Awang nak sampai ke sane!

APÉK KOTAK: Ola ola!

AWANG PENGASUH: dah idupkanlah mesin!

[Awang jumps as if moving into Apék's sampan]

*Cameras flash*  
*Comment: parah Apék!*

*Cameras flash*

[They sit as if on a boat]

[music plays like the sound of a machine.]

	<p>AWANG PENGASUH: Pé—k, pelan pelan Pék!  Pé—k, pelan Pék!  Pé—k, pelan Pék,  Pék, Pek, oi oi,  Ado—h!</p>	<p>Awang and Apék drag themselves quickly in a circular pattern as if the boat was speeding up. After one round they turn upside down as if the boat struck a huge ship and stops suddenly] <i>Roaring with laughter</i></p>
Apék's speech is unclear due to technical problems.	<p>APÉK KOTAK: haiya!  Awang a.</p> <p>AWANG PENGASUH: kepala Awang bénjol!</p> <p>APÉK KOTAK: Haiya, kapal Apék rusak aa, macam mana aa?</p> <p>AWANG PENGASUH: apelah Apék ni, kepale bénjol sampan dipiké(r)</p> <p>APÉK KOTAK: kita sudah sampai a sudah sampai a!</p> <p>AWANG PENGASUH: untung lah sampai, kalau tak, hem, lebam!</p> <p>APÉK KOTAK: Jangan macam-macam sama Apêk, Apêk tak mau anta(r) a!</p> <p>AWANG PENGASUH: ha iyelah!  Pék, Awang naik kapal ni, Apék kene tunggu kat sampan,  Apék boléh tido(r)!</p> <p>APÉK KOTAK: Ola ola,  Lu jangan lama-lama a!</p> <p>AWANG PENGASUH: Iyelah, nanti Awang bangunkan.</p>	<p><i>Roaring with laughter</i></p> <p><i>Laughing</i></p> <p><i>Roaring with laughter</i></p>
<i>Kaki</i> : feet, is used to measure boat/ship though 'metre' is wider and used in everyday life.	<p>AWANG PENGASUH: Kapalnye besa(r) betol ni, mane urangnye ni tak nampak ha, berape kaki kapal ni? «»«»«»</p> <p>O—i, tak ade nampak urang kat kapal ni, mane pegi ôrang kapal ni. «»«»«»</p> <p>Mane ôrang kapal ni, nak teriak nanti ôrang bilang, kite ôrang gile pulak.</p>	<p>[A male performer stands up but wavers because his legs are numb] <i>Roaring with laughter</i></p>
<i>Mualim</i> : A sailor who navigates the ship.  <i>Serang</i> : boatswain.	<p>MUALIM: Baéklah, pade waktu ketike ini, akulah yang bernama Mualim, yang menjage kapal besar ini. «»«»</p> <p>Wak Serang, bangun!</p> <p>WAK SERANG: Eh, sape tu manggil-manggil saye ni?</p> <p>MUALIM: Aku Mualim!</p> <p>WAK SERANG: Eh, Cik! «»</p>	<p>[After a while, the actor's legs strengthen, and continues normally] [Awais is puzzled to board the ship. While another male performer stands up to act as Wak Serang]</p>



	Hajat mane berite mane Cik memanggil saye Cik?	
	MUALIM: Kapal kite ni nak kene jage, tengôk-tengôklah, manalah tau ada ôrang luar nak naik.	<i>Cameras flash</i>
	WAK SERANG: O iyalah Cik!	
<i>Batang idong: the ridge of the nose, used to represent somebody.</i>	AWANG PENGASUH: ôrang kapal ni ade tidak, tak nampak batang idong, ni tinggi betul kapal die. Tak apelah Awang panggil aje. <><><> O—i ôrang kapa—I! <><> Saye ôrang dari darat nak naik kapal tuan hambe, boléh tak?	<i>Cameras flash</i>
	MUALIM: Ape perlu Cik naik kapal kami?	
<i>Nakhôda: captain.</i>	AWANG PENGASUH: Saye ade perlu dengan tuan nakhôda.	
	MUALIM: Baéklah! Wak Serang, cepat turunkan tangge!	[Wak Serang imitates a machine sounds and acts as if pressing a button to lower an elevator]
	WAK SERANG: O iyelah Cik! <><><> Tô—t tôt-tôt tô—t tôt-tôt-tôt-tôt tô—t	<i>Laughing</i>
	AWANG PENGASUH: wuih, aa saye naik ye!	
	WAK SERANG: Naiklah! Tô—t tôt-tôt-tôt-tôt-tôt-tôt tô—t tôt tôt...	<i>Laughing</i>
	AWANG PENGASUH: oi tuan hambe, ini tangge ape lah?	
<i>Lép: lift, elevator.</i>	WAK SERANG: Ini tangge model baru lah, tangge model lép! To—t tot-tot-tot-tot to—t tot-tot-tot-tot-tot, hop.	<i>Laughing loudly</i>
<i>Canggih: technically advanced.</i>	AWANG PENGASUH: Kalau lah ade empat macam gini, tak susah orang nak pegi jalan, <><><> Canggihnye tangge ni! Boléh saye naik?	[Awang stands up unsteadily as if the elevator lifts him up]
	MUALIM: Aa naik naik naik!	
	AWANG PENGASUH: □◻• <> ha Mualim, saye ni adelah ôrang dari darat.	[Awang jumps to board] <i>Laughing</i>
<i>Bedegam (onomatopoeia): indicates a thud.</i>	WAK SERANG: Cik tunggu Cik, tadi tu bedegam bunyi ape Cik?	
	AWANG PENGASUH: O iye ye, tadi tu bunyi kaki unta, aa	<i>Roaring with laughter</i>
	WAK SERANG: gaye la!	
	AWANG PENGASUH: ha Cik, Cik Mualim, saye ni ôrang dari darat endak bejumpe dengan Tuan Nakhôda, boléh?	
	MUALIM: boléh tu boléh, tapi tunggu dulu di sini!	

	Saye tanyekan.	
	AWANG PENGASUH: Baéklah.	[Mualim comes to see the captain]
A female patron in mak yong is called <i>Mak Senik</i> by her attendant(s). So are the Queen and Princess.	MUALIM: Mak Senik.	
	NAKHÔDA SITI DEWI: Iye saye!	
	MUALIM: Ade ôrang dari darat ingin menghadap Mak Senik.	
	NAKHÔDA SITI DEWI: Iye, sile menghadap!	
	MUALIM: Oi!	[Mualim goes back to Awang]
	AWANG PENGASUH: Aa	
	MUALIM: sinilah!	
	AWANG PENGASUH: Assalamualaik- um!	<i>Laughing</i>
<i>Tuan hambe</i> : my lord. It is used to show politeness.	NAKHÔDA SITI DEWI: Wa‘alaikumsalam Tuan hambe!	[Awang comes closer to Nakhôda and greets her]
	MUALIM: Becapak lah!	
	AWANG PENGASUH: Éh, saye ni kalau téngôk yang cantik cantik suke terpana Cik. «»«»	<i>Laughing loudly.</i>
	Aa Cik Nakhôda, saye ni adalah ôrang dari darat yang dititahperintahkan oléh tuan hambe saye untuk betanye sesuatu dengan Cik Nakhoda, boléh?	<i>Comment: parah Awang!</i>
	NAKHÔDA SITI DEWI: Silekan tuan hambe!	<i>Cameras flash</i>
	AWANG PENGASUH: Aa, «»	
	Cik Nakhôda ni, siape name, dari mane hendak ke mane, dan membawa muatan ape Cik?	
	NAKHÔDA SITI DEWI: Oh begitu, kata?	
	AWANG PENGASUH: O iyalah	
<i>Bemban</i> : a tree whose bark is used for making baskets. ( <i>Clinogyne grandis</i> ).	NAKHÔDA SITI DEWI: sebena(r)nye, saye yang bername, Nakhôda Siti Dewi, «»«»	
	Kami berasal dari Negeri Sebemban, kapal ini pun tiade bemuatan ape-ape. «»	
	Kami membawa utusan Raje Lêla Mude yang betujoh beradék. «»	
	Haluan kapal kami hendak menuju Gunong Berintan, «»	
<i>Nyaye, nyaya, aniaya</i> : unjust, wrong.	Kami membawa utusan meminang anak Raje Jôhan Syah Nyaye, Tuan Putri Rencane Mude. «»«»	
	Tuan hambe naik ke kapal kami ni hendak memungut cukai atau pun kancing alas ke?	
	AWANG PENGASUH: aa tidak, «»	<i>Cameras flash</i>
	kedatangan saye kemari ni hanye dititahperintahkan untuk membandingkan, yang manekah yang cantik molék antare negeri Cik dan negeri kami.	

*Betatahkan, from tatah:*  
studded with something.

NAKHÔDA SITI DEWI: Tuan hambe, «»  
cube Tuan hambe téngôk kapal kami ini, betatahkan  
intan dan berlian,

AWANG PENGASUH: U—i, memang cantik kapal  
die, tinggi.

NAKHÔDA SITI DEWI: ape lagi negeri kami,  
tentulah lebih cantik, lebih molék, dan lebih megah.

AWANG PENGASUH: Cik Nakhôda!

NAKHÔDA SITI DEWI: iye saye

AWANG PENGASUH: kire-kire, boléh tak kami pegi  
ke negeri Cik Nakhôda tu?

NAKHÔDA SITI DEWI: Mengape tidak, tuan hambe.  
Tetapi ade due syarat yang harus tuan hambe penuhi,  
untuk sampai ke negeri kami.

AWANG PENGASUH: Due syarat, ape itu Cik  
Nakhôda?

NAKHÔDA SITI DEWI: Yang pertame, tuan hambe  
harus membuat kapal sebesar dan semegah kapal  
ini. «»

*Kesaktian: magical power*

Dan yang kedue, tuan hambe harus memiliki ilmu  
kesaktian, sebab jike tidak tuan hambe takkan  
pernah sampai ke negeri kami.

*Cameras flash*

AWANG PENGASUH: Kenape pulak?

NAKHÔDA SITI DEWI: Sebab negeri kami sangatlah  
jaoh!

*Cameras flash*

AWANG PENGASUH: O begitu, kata?

NAKHÔDA SITI DEWI: O iyalah Tuan hambe.

AWANG PENGASUH: baéklah Cik Nakhôda,  
terime kaséh sudah menjawab segale pertanyaan saye,  
saye nak môhôn diri dulu lah ye.

NAKHÔDA SITI DEWI: tapi tunggu dulu tuan  
hambe. «»

*Cendera hati: a gift.*

Saye ade cendera hati yang dapat dibawa balék.

AWANG PENGASUH: u—i cendera hati, iyelah.

NAKHÔDA SITI DEWI: Wak Serang,  
bawakan saye sebôngkah emas!

*Whispers and comments  
about the gold.*

WAK SERANG: Ini sebôngkah emasnye Cik.

NAKHÔDA SITI DEWI: terime kaséh,  
Tuan hambe, inilah cendera hati yang dapat diberikan  
untuk raje dari Tuan hambe.

*Cameras flash*

AWANG PENGASUH: sebesar ni Cik? «»

*Laughing  
Cameras flash*



Figure 5.11 Awang asks questions to the captain Nakhôda Siti Dewi on board.

Figure 5.12 Awang disembarks from the ship, bringing a gift, a hunk of gold.



Ih banyak-banyak terime kaséh lah Cik,  
Terime kaséh lah, kalau begitu saye nak môhôn diri  
dulu ye Cik Nakhôda. <><><>  
Assalamualaikum!

NAKHÔDA SITI DEWI: Wa'alaikumsalam!

AWANG PENGASUH: Mualim!

MUALIM: Iye!

AWANG PENGASUH: Tugas saye dah selesai, saye  
nak môhôn diri dulu.

MUALIM: Wak Serang!

WAK SERANG: O iyelah Cik!

MUALIM: Tamu kite nak balék

WAK SERANG: nak balék?

MUALIM: Iye!

Cepat turunkan tangge!

WAK SERANG: Turunkan tangge lagi?

MUALIM: Iye!

WAK SERANG: Tak boleh terejun aje?

MUALIM: Tak ade tak ade!

*Laughing*

WAK SERANG: aa iye. <><><><>

Dah?

rrng rrng, rrng, rrng rrng rrng, rrng...

□□••••

*Cameras flash*

[Wak Serang imitates the movement of riding a motorbike]

AWANG PENGASUH: ui ui Cik, ape bunyi tangge ni  
Cik?

*Motor K:* A certain brand of motorbike.

WAK SERANG: Ee ni tangge mesin baru, model  
motor K, lanjut. □□••••

ggrrng, ggrrng, ggrrng, rrng

*Cameras flash*

AWANG PENGASUH: pelan sikit Cik, a—a ado—i  
sakit nye ee...

APÉK KOTAK: haiya Awang a,  
wa tu kejut kejut la, wa sedang tidor a, lu pegi mana a?

<>

[Awang stands up unsteadily as if an elevator is bringing him down quickly. He falls down on Apék's boat]

	Napa lu lama a, lu kata lu pegi sebenta(r), tapi Apêk tunggu tunggu lu tak ada, lu musti baya(r) duit lebéh a!	
	AWANG PENGASUH: iyelah! Itu ha, die punye tangge model Honda, entah ape pun.	<i>Roaring with laughter</i>
	«» Ha Pék, sekarang, tugas kite sudah selesai, Apék kene bawa Awang balék, kite balék sekarang!	
	APÉK KOTAK: Awang aa, angin sedang kuat a. Macam mana, kalo kita pake perahu laya(r)?	
	AWANG PENGASUH: Apék, dayung ade, mesin ade, perahu laya(r) pun ade?	
<i>Kulkas: refrigerator.</i>	APÉK KOTAK: Ada lah, Apêk semua ada, kulkas aja tak ada	<i>Laughing</i>
<i>Tékong: navigator of a boat.</i>	AWANG PENGASUH: Kesian Apék tak dapat minum aé(r) es. «» Iyelah Pék, Awang pasang laya(r), Apék tékong, Awang buka tali.	<i>Laughing loudly</i>
<i>Syak: worried.</i>	APÉK KOTAK: Ola ola ola AWANG PENGASUH: tapi Awang syak lah nanti kite jatuh lagi. APÉK KOTAK: tak ada apa-apa la, selama ada Apêk lu selamat a!	
	AWANG PENGASUH: o— iyelah iyelah iyelah. «» Kemane emas besa(r) nak tarok ni.	<i>Laughing loudly</i>
	APÉK KOTAK: untuk Apêk aja maô, Apêk punya.	
	AWANG PENGASUH: tak ada!	<i>Laughing loudly</i>
<i>Malah: angry</i>	APÉK KOTAK: Gitu aja malah aa! AWANG PENGASUH: ha Pék, Awang pasang laya(r) ye. Huh, «»«»«» Pék, pegang Pék! Betol ini Pék?	[Awang stands in front as if handling the sail and rope. Apék stands behind as if to control the rudder]
	APÉK KOTAK: Aa lu percaya sama Apêk a!	[Awang and Apek move unsteadily as if the boat was unstable and being blown by the wind].
	AWANG PENGASUH: Awang bukak tali ni. «» Ha sudah, o—i Pék, Pék, Pék, Pék, Pék, Pék, Pék, Pék ...	<i>Roaring with laughter</i>
<i>Uwek: the sound of throwing up.</i>	APÉK KOTAK: haiya, uwêk uwêk uwêk, uwêk. Haiya Awang aa, lebat angin punya kuat aa, uwêk.	<i>Laughing loudly</i>
	AWANG PENGASUH: lagak orang laut, muntah.	<i>Laughing loudly</i>
	APÉK KOTAK: Angin, angin kuat a. Apêk, Apêk tak ada apa apa.	

	AWANG PENGASUH: ha iyelah, kite sudah pun sampai Pék, marilah kite balék.	
	APÉK KOTAK: a a a a Awang a, lui mana lui lui?	
	AWANG PENGASUH: adu—h sakitnye perut Awang, aduh, aduh, aduh...	<i>Roaring with laughter</i>
	APÉK KOTAK: jadi macam mana a?	
	AWANG PENGASUH: Aduh sakit uh.	
<i>Melepas: to defecate.</i>	Ah Pék, Awang sakit Pék Awang nak môhôn ijin nak melepas sekejap boléh Pék?	
	APÉK KOTAK: a lu mau tipu Apêk a?	
	AWANG PENGASUH: Tak ade!	
	Awang tak pernah tipu ôrang Pék!	
	APÉK KOTAK: Ola ola, lu pegi belak jangan lama lama a!	
	Lu lama lama Apek intip loh!	<i>Laughing loudly</i>
	AWANG PENGASUH: Iyelah iyelah iyelah!	
<i>Sikat (slang): to smack.</i>	APÉK KOTAK: Lama lama o, wa sikat lu!	
	AWANG PENGASUH: macam mane nak lari dari Apék ni. «»«»	
	Tak apelah lari aje, Apék kan dah tue, tulang die roboh.	
	□□.... □□.... □□....	
	Hui ade Apék.	<i>[Awang tries to escape from Apék. Apék knows and attempts to catch him, which is dramatised by music. These two are quarrelling]</i>
	APÉK KOTAK: a—a lu mau pegi mana aa?	
	Lu mau pegi mana?	<i>Roaring with laughter</i>
	Haiya, lu mau lari a—a,	<i>Cameras flash</i>
	AWANG PENGASUH: ado—h ampun Pék, ampun!	<i>[Apék tries to catch Awang, who is trying to escape]</i>
	APÉK KOTAK: Lu tipu Apêk a, lu kata mau bêlak!	
	AWANG PENGASUH: Ampun Pék!	
	Iyelah iyelah, Apék ikut Awang kite pegi ke Lédang Balai.	
	APÉK KOTAK: a- a- a- Apék jumpa Laja?	
	AWANG PENGASUH: Iye!	
	APÉK KOTAK: Apêk?	
	AWANG PENGASUH: Iyelah!	
	APÉK KOTAK: Ola ola	
<i>This trip indicates the change of setting and the end of this section. Awang and Apék's arrival indicates the transfer to the next part.</i>	AWANG PENGASUH: ha iyelah, mari Pék, kite jumpa Cik Wang, kite ke Lédang Balai!	
	Belari selalu cik o—i!	<i>[Awang and Apék run in circles as if going to Lédang Balai]</i>
	AWANG PENGASUH: berenti selalu cik o—i!	

#### 4. Retrieving heirlooms from Raja Bungsu Sakti's predecessor

Awang Pengasuh, who did not pay Apék Kotak for the ferry, takes him to the palace of Raja Bungsu Sakti. They arrive at Lédang Balai, and Awang wants the prince to solve his problem to pay the fare. In this episode, Awang reports his investigation to Raja Bungsu Sakti and hands a hunk of gold presented by the captain to his master. The Prince feels insulted by the captain and wants to restore his dignity. He asks Awang about the heirloom from his father. Awang reveals the secret about the heirloom after Raja Bungsu Sakti pays the fee to Apék Kotak. This time is 10:08 pm, and this episode takes place for 17 minutes.

APÉK KOTAK: Haiya, jaoh punya istana a.

AWANG PENGASUH: ha Pék, sekarang kite sudah  
pun sampai dekat Lédang Balai. «»  
Aa Apék ikut sama kite pegi jumpe Cik Wang.

APÉK KOTAK: Apék masuk dalam a?

*Cengkonek or cengkunek:*  
(colloquial) doing and  
talking nonsense.

AWANG PENGASUH: Iyelah, Apék banyak betul  
cengkonék dari tadi ah.

*Laughing*

APÉK KOTAK: a—h, besal punya istana a.

*Jakun:* a name given to  
aboriginal tribesmen in  
parts of the Malay  
Peninsula. Here *jakun* is  
used to name Apék's  
countrified attitude.

AWANG PENGASUH: Pék cepat sikit Pék!  
Jakun!

APÉK KOTAK: a—a besal istana aa

AWANG PENGASUH: Pék jangan jakun gitu Pék,  
malu Pék ai! «»«»

Cik Wang, Awang datang menghadap Cik Wang!

CIK WANG: O iyelah Awang.

APÉK KOTAK: Apék datang sama a.

CIK WANG: o iyelah Apék.  
Tapi Awang, kenape Apék dibawa besame ya Awang?

*Cameras flash*

AWANG PENGASUH: Sebena(r)nye Cik...

APÉK KOTAK: begini a Laja,  
lu diam diam, biar Apék cakap sama Laja! «»

Begini, hah, Apék talik napas dulu a, hah. «»

Begini a Laja, Apék, bawa Awang pegi kapal besa(r)  
satu, pegi kapal besa(r) dua, sudah sampai Awang  
tak nak mau baya(r). «»

Apék tanya lui mana lui mana lui, dia tak nak mau kasi  
Apék a!

*Cameras flash*  
*Laughing*

CIK WANG: Betulkan itu ya Awang?

APÉK KOTAK: Dia kata dia mau bêlak...

CIK WANG: diamlah Apék!  
Betulkah itu ya Awang?

*Laughing*

*Pakdul:* (colloquial) an

AWANG PENGASUH: Betul Cik Wang. «»

acronym for ‘pakai dulu,’  
meaning spending money  
in advance, and then  
applying for  
reimbursement.  
It is interesting that  
Awang criticises his  
master.

*Ocek*, from *kocek*: pocket.

*Xièxiè*: thank you  
(Mandarin)

It is telling that Awang  
reports the case to Cik  
Wang and repeats his  
dialogue with Captain Siti  
Dewi. This helps remind  
and keep the audience in  
the storyline.

Sebab Cik Wang tu, asik nak titah perintah Awang nak  
suruh Awang pake bahase pakdu—I pakdul,  
pakdu—I pakdul, bahase pakai dulu.  
Mane gaji Awang bulan kemaren dah kene potong  
lagi. «»  
Terpakse lah Awang tipu Apék.

CIK WANG: Baéklah kalau begitu ya Awang! «»  
Dayang, ambékkkan empat keping emas untuk  
diberikan kepada Apék ye dayang!

APÉK KOTAK: Lui o lui, lui, empat keping emas o.  
«»«»

Cicici haiya, wa banyak punya duit ah, mana ocek  
mana ocek. «»«»  
Makasi ya Laja, semoga Laja panjang umo(r) a, sehat  
selalu a, makin besa(r) istana punya. «»

*Xièxiè* Laja. «»  
Lu Awang a, lain kali lu jangan naik sampan Apék  
Kotak kalau tak nak baya(r). «»«»«»  
Haiya Apek lupa tempat a. ☒••

AWANG PENGASUH: Cik Wang, Cik Wang.

CIK WANG: o iyalah Awang!

AWANG PENGASUH: Cik Wang. «»  
Segale yang dititahkan oléh Cik Wang sudah Awang  
laksanekan. «»  
Segale kapal kapal besa(r), tôngkang wangkang, dan  
perahu-perahu besa(r) sudah Awang selidék Cik  
Wang.

CIK WANG: o iyalah Awang!

AWANG PENGASUH: O iyalah Cik Wang, ade satu  
kapal besa(r) yang bernakhôdakan Siti Dewi, Cik  
Wang. «»  
Die membawe rômbôngan hendak meminang daripada  
anak daripada Raje Jôhan Syah Nyaye.

CIK WANG: o begitu, kata?

AWANG PENGASUH: Aa Raje Lêla Muda, yang  
betujoh beradik Cik Wang. «»«»  
Katenye Cik Wang, die cakap, kapal merêke saje  
besa(r) Cik Wang, apelagi negeri merêke.

CIK WANG: begitu katanya ya Awang?

AWANG PENGASUH: Begitu Cik Wang.  
Abis tu Cik Wang, Awang tanye boléh tak kite pegi ke  
negeri merêke.  
Boléh!  
Tapi Cik Na ape, Cik Siti Dewi tu cakap kite harus

*Laughing loudly*

[A female choir member  
brings coins to Cik  
Wang]

*Cameras flash  
Laughing*

[Apék mumbles while  
walking back to sit,  
which sounds funny]  
*Roaring with laughter*



tunaikan due syarat Cik Wang.

CIK WANG: syarat yang bagaimane tu ya Awang?

AWANG PENGASUH: Yang pertame Cik Wang,  
kite harus bise membuat kapal seindah dan semegah  
kapal merêke Cik Wang. «»

Dan yang kedue, kite harus memiliki ilmu kesaktian.

CIK WANG: Sebab ape ya Awang?

AWANG PENGASUH: Sebab kalau kite tidak  
memiliki due syarat itu Cik Wang, kite tidak akan  
mampu pegi ke negeri merêke. «»

*Cameras flash  
Some people chat with  
each other.*

Karene Cik Wang.

CIK WANG: karene ape ya Awang?

AWANG PENGASUH: Karene negeri merêke terlalu  
jauh Cik Wang.

*Cameras flash*

CIK WANG: begitu katenye ya Awang?

AWANG PENGASUH: O iyalah Cik Wang!  
Ketika Awang nak mohon diri kepade Cik Nakhôda,  
Awang diberikan ha ni die «»«»

Sebôngkah emas Cik Wang,

Cendera hati yang boléh dihadihkan untuk Cik Wang.

*Cameras flash*

CIK WANG: Awang, atas titah perintah saye ya  
Awang,  
balékkkan Awang!

*Cameras flash*

AWANG PENGASUH: Balékkkan Cik Wang?

CIK WANG: Balékkkan Awang!

*Cameras flash*

AWANG PENGASUH: Sayang, Cik Wang.

CIK WANG: Titah perintah saye Awang!

AWANG PENGASUH: Cik Wang, sayang!

CIK WANG: Balékkkan Awang!

AWANG PENGASUH: Baéklah Cik Wang,  
Nanti Awang cari Apék Kotak. «»  
Awang nak kene balékkkan lagi pada Cik Nakhôda tu.

*Chuckling*

CIK WANG: Saye merase malu Awang diperlakukan  
oleh Cik Nakhôda tu ya Awang.

*Cameras flash*

Ape kurangnye negeri kite ni Awang?

Emas, perak, intan, me berlian, semue ade ya Awang.  
Awang, kalau begitu Awang, adekah barang satu  
penginggalan ayahande saye tatkala dahulu ya  
Awang?

AWANG PENGASUH: O iyalah Cik Wang, Awang  
takut nak becakap Cik Wang.

The secret Awang keeps about the heirloom indicates its importance, which is not for everyday use, but only special situations and needs.	<p>CIK WANG: Ceritelah Awang!</p> <p>AWANG PENGASUH: Cik Wang, semase Awang diberi amanah ini oleh Raje Gôndang ayahande Cik Wang, Awang disuruh besumpah, kalaulah Cik Wang nak tau juge, Cik Wang kene besumpah same dengan Awang.</p>	<i>Cameras flash</i>
As the oath indicates, it must be an important heirloom so that Cik Wang has to keep it a secret too.	<p>CIK WANG: Sumpah yang bagaimane tu ya Awang?</p> <p>AWANG PENGASUH: Baéklah kalau begitu Cik Wang, mari kite bejabat tangan telebih dahulu. «» Cik Wang ikut kate-kate Awang ye!</p> <p>AWANG PENGASUH DAN CIK WANG: Bumi dan langit saye besumpah, kalau pecah di mulut semue orang tau, kalau pecah di perut hanye tulang yang tau. ☐☐☐☐••••</p>	<i>Cameras flash</i>
<p><i>Jerak</i>: a tree (<i>Decaspermum paniculatum</i>). <i>Jentara</i> or <i>jentera</i>: spinning wheel; rotating Chinese lantern (Wilkinson 1908:86). Cik Bulan refers to the Queen, Mak Senik.</p>	<p>AWANG PENGASUH: Begitulah bunyi sumpahnye Cik Wang. «»«»</p> <p>Sebenanye, ayahande Cik Wang Raje Gôndang memang ade memberi amanah satu amanah kepada Awang, yaitu Sarung Batak Tôngkat Sakti. «» Tapi sebena(r)nye Cik Wang, yang menyimpan Sarung Batak Tôngkat Sakti tu bukanlah Awang, melainkan ibunde Cik Wang.</p> <p>CIK WANG: Kalau begitu marilah kite mengadap Bonde Jerak Jentare ya Awang!</p> <p>AWANG PENGASUH: O iyalah Cik Wang. Marilah Cik Wang ikut sama kita pegi ke tempat Cik Bulan. «» Jalan selalu cik o—i!</p> <p>AWANG PENGASUH: berenti selalu cik o—i!</p> <p>CIK WANG: Anande datang Bunde.</p>	<i>Chuckling</i>
It is necessary to note that, in this group, the ladies-in-waiting who act as the choir also dance. A group from Mantang Island maintains their practice that the choir does not dance but only sings.	<p>MAK SENIK: Oh Anande datang, kata.</p> <p>Darilah ja—oh silau tepa—nda—ng, terpandang ma—ri tibe kema—ri</p> <p>darilah ja—oh silau terpa—nda—ng, terpandang ma—ri tibe kema—ri</p> <p>apelah ha—jat berite ma—ne— belari la—ri mengha—dap bonde</p> <p>apelah ha—jat berite ma—ne— belari la—ri mengha—dap bonde</p>	<p>[Mak Senik sings and dances, lifting arms to the level of diaphragm, swaying right and left]</p> <p>[Chorus follow the lead in singing and dancing in sitting position, swaying arms right and left]</p> <p>[Chorus follows] <i>A few in the audience chat</i> [Cik Wang and his mother stand up]</p>
<p><i>Hajat</i>: a wish. <i>Murai</i>: magpie, robin</p>	<p>MAK SENIK: ape hajat berite mane Anande menghadap Bonde ya Anande?</p> <p>CIK WANG: Bonde, sebenanye Anande ni ade hajat. «»</p>	

(*Copsychus saularis*)  
(Wilkinson 1908:148).  
Raja Bungsu Sakti tries to  
in secret his source of  
information by saying that  
he knows about the  
heirloom from *murai*  
*bercerita* or the same as  
*kabar burung*, rumors or  
hearsay.

*Besolek*: to make up, to  
dress up.

With this mention,  
*penonton*, Inang keeps in  
touch with the audience,  
or it is a way to attract  
attention and get a  
response.

Yang mane Ananda mendengar murai becerite, yang  
Bunde ade menyimpan Sarung Batak Tôngkat Sakti  
peninggalan ayahande, Bunde. «»  
Jikalau memanglah ade boléhkah Anande  
menengoknye ye Bunde?

MAK SENIK: Sarung Batak Tôngkat Sakti tu memang  
ade, Anande, «»  
tapi Bunde tak tau tempatnye, melainkan Inang.

CIK WANG: O iyelah Bunde.

MAK SENIK: o iye—lah mu Inang, Inang o—i! «»«»

□□□••••

O iye—lah mu Inang, Inang o—i!

□□□••••

[Mak Senik turns to  
summon Inang]  
*Cameras flash*

INANG PENGASUH: E—h, siapelah panggil panggil  
Inang ni ha baru Inang baru nak besolék. «»  
Tak endak lalu néngok orang senang ôrang baru nak  
tido(r) ni ha—a

MAK SENIK: saye Inang!

INANG PENGASUH: Saye? «»«»

O—i, Mak Senik, kata! «»«»

Hajat, hajat mana berita mana Mak Senik manggil  
Inang Mak Senik?

[Inang walks coquettish  
to Mak Senik]  
*Roaring with laughter  
and shouting*

[Inang is still coquettish]  
*Laughing loudly*

MAK SENIK: Inang, anande saye datang kemari  
hendak mencari Sarung Batak Tôngkat Sakti ya  
Inang.

INANG PENGASUH: Sarung Batak Tôngkat Sakti  
Mak Senik?

MAK SENIK: O iyalah Inang.

Bukankah ade Inang menyimpannye Inang?

INANG PENGASUH: Ah ade Mak Senik, tunggu dulu  
ye, tunggu sekejap. «»

Tak usah pegi jaoh jaoh, susa—h Inang nak cari.

*Cameras flash*

MAK SENIK: tidak Inang.

INANG PENGASUH: Iyelah, mane ye? «»

Adek jumpe tak Sarung Batak Inang? «»

Tak ade! «»

Inang cari sendiri aje lah. «»

Mane Inang simpan ini ha? «»

Penonton ade jumpe tak? «»«»

Aa ini die ha, bohong. «»«»

Mak Seni—k, ini ha, penôntôn bôhông, kate die tak  
ade, padahal ade.

[Inang asks one of the  
female performers]  
[Inang walks in circles  
and goes to the front of  
the stage]  
*Roaring with laughter  
Laughing loudly*

*Cameras flash  
Laughing*

MAK SENIK: O iyalah Inang!

	INANG PENGASUH: Ini Mak Senik ha, Ini Sarung Batak Tôngkat Sakti die Mak Senik!	
	MAK SENIK: Makasih ye Inang!	
	INANG PENGASUH: Same-same.	
<i>Sarung Batak</i> is visualised as a sarong worn around the waist, although the actor wears it like a sash. Another version of the story from Mantang reveals that <i>Sarung Batak</i> covers all the body to look like a member of an aboriginal tribesman (Batak). But the group from Mantang does not have such a prop and also uses a sarong. A wooden stick is used as the <i>Tongkat Sakti</i> .	MAK SENIK: Anande, inilah Sarung Batak Tongkat Sakti peninggalan ayahande Anande. Jikalau Anande perlu, maka ambillah!	[Mak Senik hands the heirlooms to Cik Wang] <i>Cameras flash</i>
	CIK WANG: Terime kaséh Bonde yang baik hati. <>> Bonde!	
	MAK SENIK: O iyalah Anande	
	CIK WANG: sebenarnya Anande ingin membuka sarung ni, tapi tempatnye pulak terlalu sempit Bonde. <>>	
	Kalau begitulah marilah kite ke taman ye Bonde	
	MAK SENIK: o iyalah Anande. ke taman selalu cik o—i!	[Cik Wang, his mother, and Inang circle for one round as if going to the royal garden] <i>Cameras flash</i>
This formula indicates the arrival.	MAK SENIK: berenti selalu cik o—i! <>><>> Baéklah Anande kite sudahpun sampai di Taman Bunga. <>> Inang!	
	INANG PENGASUH: Iye Mak Senik	
	MAK SENIK: tôleng bukakan pintu paga(r) ye Inang!	
Inang argues with Mak Senik in a similar way to Awang who criticises Cik Wang. See Chapter 4 on the liminality and inverted norms.	INANG PENGASUH: ah kenapelah semue nak Inang yang keje Mak Senik a?	<i>Laughing</i>
	MAK SENIK: Lekaslah Inang!	
	INANG PENGASUH: ah, iyelah Mak Senik, sebenta(r) ye Mak Senik, Inang nak cari dulu mane kunci die ni ha. <>>	
	Inang pening la Inang ni pelupe sangat la Mak Senik walaupun cantik macam ni. <>><>>	<i>Roaring with laughter</i>
	Mane ye kunci Inang?	
	MAK SENIK: Jumpe inang?	
	INANG PENGASUH: Belum Mak Senik sebenta(r) ye, adu—h, mane ye? <>>	<i>Laughing loudly</i>
<i>Celekah</i> : from the gesture of the performer, it refers to one's crotch. <i>Kolo(r)</i> : underwear. <i>Kutang</i> : bra.	Dekat celekah-celekah ade tak ye? <>><>> Dalam kôcek tak ade. <>> Ah, dalam kôle(r)? <>> Tak ade juge. Ha, dalam kutang agaknye. <>> Tak ade juge!	<i>Roaring with laughter</i> <i>Shout: oi Awang! Eh Awang pulak, Inang!</i> <i>Laughing</i>
	MAK SENIK: Lekaslah Inang!	<i>Cameras flash</i>
	INANG PENGASUH: Sebenta(r) Mak Senik.	

- O iye Inang tarok dekat telinga ni ha, kecap ye Mak Senik. <><><>  
Ha!  
MAK SENIK: Inang, bunyi ape tu?  
Kunci ke taik telinga?  
INANG PENGASUH: Ini kunci becampo(r) taik telinga Mak Senik.  
MAK SENIK: hemm Inang. <><><>  
Lekaslah Inang buka pintu paga(r) kite!  
INANG PENGASUH: Baéklah Mak Senik, sebenta(r) ye Mak Senik kene saba(r) bia(r) tambah cantik macam Inang. <><><>  
Inang bukak ye Mak Senik ye. <><><>  
Arrrh!  
He eh, udah Mak Senik pintu taman sudah tebukak.  
Silelah Mak Senik masok!
- Laughing loudly*  
[Inang acts pulling something from her ear]  
*Cameras flash*  
*Laughing*  
*Roaring with laughter*  
*Laughing loudly*  
*Cameras flash*
- As a clown figure in this play, Inang always responds to her master in a comical way.

Figure 5.13 Raja Bungsu Sakti received his father's heirlooms, Sarung Batak and Tongkat Sakti, from his mother.



Figure 5.14 Raja Bungsu Sakti planted Selasih Emas and Selasih Perak, holy basil plants in the royal garden.

- MAK SENIK: O Iyalah Inang. <><><>  
Eh. <><><>  
Buah ape ni Inang?  
INANG PENGASUH: ah?  
MAK SENIK: buah ape ni?  
Inang ngape jalan macam tu?  
INANG PENGASUH: Tak ade Mak Senik, cakup buah Inang. <><>  
Itu buah nangke Mak Senik.  
MAK SENIK: Buah nangke?  
INANG PENGASUH: Iye Mak Senik!  
MAK SENIK: Kenapa buah nangke kecil sangat Inang?  
INANG PENGASUH: Ini buah nangke belum cukup umo(r)!
- Cameras flash*  
[Mak Senik picks up something small and round from the ground]  
[Inang holds her crotch while walking]  
*Laughing loudly*  
*Roaring with laughter*  
*Roaring with laughter*
- Inang says that something like the seed of a jackfruit is a testicle dropped from her crotch. Inang is a female character played by a male actor.
- MAK SENIK: Oh begitu, kata! <><>  
Ade candenye tak Inang?  
INANG PENGASUH: Ade la, Mak Senik nak denga(r)

juga kata?

MAK SENIK: O iya

INANG PENGASUH: Aa sebenta(r) ye Mak Senik ye.  
Nangke ni belum cukup umo(r), tapi pedas, he he. <>>  
Ha, macam ni Mak Senik e, <>>

nangke bukan sembarang nangke—e  
nangke ini belum cukup umo(r)—  
alah sayang saya—ng disaya—ng  
alah sayang saya—ng disaya—ng

Eh pemusik cari kelahi nampaknye ni!

MAK SENIK: Inang, sudahlah Inang! <>>  
Mari kita menyanyi Inang!

INANG PENGASUH: O iyalah Mak Senik.

It is peculiar that the Prince, Cik Wang, sings and dances in the royal garden together with Inang and Dayang (ladies-in-waiting). It seems bizarre in the story world order based on gender as is showed throughout mak yong repertoire. This, however, is not always the case in most mak yong performances.

Banyaklah bu—nge Ina—ng, di dalam ta—ma—n  
banyaklah bu—nge Ina—ng, di dalam ta—ma—n  
Ade yang pu—téh Ina—ng, ade yang me—ra—h  
ade yang pu—téh Ina—ng, ade yang me—ra—h

Banyaklah bu—nge Ina—ng, di dalam ta—ma—n  
banyaklah bu—nge Ina—ng, di dalam ta—ma—n  
Ade yang pu—téh Ina—ng, ade yang me—ra—h  
ade yang pu—téh Ina—ng, ade yang me—ra—h

Saye lah su—ke Ina—ng menimang bu—nge—  
saye lah su—dah Inang menimang bu—nge—  
petik sepu—cok Inang buat jamba—nga—n  
petik sepu—cok Inang buat jamba—nga—n

Saye lah su—ke Ina—ng menimang bu—nge—  
saye lah su—dah Inang menimang bu—nge—  
petik sepu—cok Inang buat jamba—nga—n  
petik sepu—cok Inang buat jamba—nga—n

[Inang sings and makes comical movements. After accompanying Inang singing one stanza, musicians continue to play] *Laughing loudly*

[Cik Wang sings, Inang and Mak Senik dance, swaying body and arms. Female performers stand up and dance].

[Chorus follows the lead in singing and dancing]

[Cik Wang takes the lead in singing and dancing]

[Chorus follows the lead in singing and dancing]

*Selasih*: one of plants in a group of basilicum, which is 'holy basil,' (*Ocimum tenuiflorum*, *syn*).

*Selasih Emas* and *Selasih Perak* are mythical plants.

CIK WANG: Baéklah Bonde, di sini tempat Anande ingin menanam *Selasih Perak* dan *Selasih Emas* ni.  
<>><>><>>

Kat mane saye boléh nanam Bonde?

*Cameras flash*

MAK SENIK: Inang, Anande saye hendak menanam *Selasih Perak* dan *Selasih Emas* ye Inang!

INANG PENGASUH: O iyalah Mak Senik. <>>  
Ah ini ade tanah Mak Senik. <>>  
Ah, silelah!

CIK WANG: Inilah saatnye saye nak menanam *selasih* ni ye Bunde.

MAK SENIK: tetapi untuk ape ya Anande?

CIK WANG: Sebab Anande ingin merantau ke negeri orang, mengenal mate *dacéng* orang dan mengenal

*Dacéng*: scale.  
*Gantang*: cylindrical

gallon-measure which varies with the locality (Wilkinson 1932). *Cupak*: a quarter of a gantang, approximately the capacity of half a coconut shell (Wilkinson 1908:44).

The message of the proverb is do not act like a cock, which is arrogant. Instead, act like a hen, which is humble. *Resmi*: nature, character, temper (Iskandar 1986:975).

*Tesampuk*: collided, bumped.

There is no dance or music that signals the end of this part. But Cik Wang starts a quest, which indicates a turn to the next episode.

cupak dan gantang, Bunde.

MAK SENIK: Baéklah Bunde ijinkan Anande

CIK WANG: Bunde, Selasih Emas dan Selasih Perak ni akan jadi pertande untuk Bonde. «»«»

Jikalau Selasih Perak ni layu make Anande menderite di negeri orang. «»

Jikalau Selasih Emas ni layu, make Anande mangkat di negeri orang Bunde.

MAK SENIK: O iyalah Anande,

tetapi Bonde ingin berpesan, jika Anande sudah pun sampai di negeri orang, janganlah Anande bongkak dan sombong ye. «»

Jangan diikuti resminya ayam jantan, ikut resminya ayam betine.

CIK WANG: O iyalah Bunde.

MAK SENIK: O iyalah Anande.

CIK WANG: Inang, lirikan Inang!

Saye takut tesampuk Inang

INANG PENGASUH: O iyelah Mak Senik, maaf Mak Senik.

*Cameras flash*

*Cameras flash*

[Cik Wang sticks two artificial trees in a flowerpot, see figure 5.14]

*Cameras flash*

## 5. The quest of Raja Bungsu Sakti and the encounter with Princess Putri Rencana Muda



Having planted Selasih Emas and Selasih Perak, Raja Bungsu Sakti commences his quest. He brings with him the two heirlooms. In the quest, he travels through the jungle and infiltrates the Royal Garden of Negeri Gunung Berintan, where he meets Princess Putri Rencana Muda. He wears the magical cloth, Sarung Batak, which changes his appearance into a vagabond in the forest (Pembatak/Batak). This mask is not as scary compared to the white-face and bumpy-headed mask of

Figure 5.15 Raja Bungsu Sakti in the appearance of a vagabond forest man, Pembatak.

the Pembatak from Mantang Island's Sanggar Bungsu Sakti (Figure 1.4). In this episode, Pembatak departs from the Royal Garden of Negeri Lenggang Cahaya to the jungle and begins his wanderings to Gunung Berintan. The time is 10:25 pm and this episode lasts for 18 and a half minutes.

Other versions of this story, from Mantang Island and the Malay Peninsula, tell that Pembatak flew to Gunung Berintan (*tanjak melayang*).

CIK WANG: Baéklah di sini tempat saye hendak mengaléh diri menjadi orang tidak dikenal. «»  
Mengaléh selalu cik o—i!

PEMBATAK: Baéklah pade waktu ketike ini saye sudahpun mengaléh rupe. «»«»

Baéklah di sini tempat saye nak bejalan-jalan dahulu Bejalan selalu cik o—i!

[Music is played to illustrate the transformation. A male performer with red mask takes Cik Wang's place].

While Raja Bungsu Sakti (Pembatak) is roaming through the forest, a shepherd named Wak Pakih Jenang herds his sheeps to a plain. There, Wak Pakih Jenang coincidentally encounters Pembatak who is passing through. Pembatak asks Wak Pakih Jenang about the kingdom of Gunung Berintan and the direction to reach it. As Wak Pakih Jenang reveals, Pembatak goes to the royal garden of Gunung Berintan, where he meets Putri Rencana Muda. Audience chuckles and comments on Wak Pakih Jenang's gesture and stick when he comes out.

Figure 5.16 Pembatak asks Wak Pakih Jenang about the direction to Gunung Berintan.



*Lah* is a short form of *telah*, meaning already.

WAK PAKIH JENANG: Baéklah, pade waktu ketike ini, sayelah yang bername Wak Pakih Jenang. «»  
Baéklah, saye ni nak néngôk kambéng-kambéng saye dulu. «»«»

*Cameras flash*

A—a di tanah padang ni lah dulu saye dihadiahkan raje due êko(r) kambéng, satu kambéng jantan, satu lagi kambéng betine. «»

*Cameras flash*

A—a sekarang ni kambéng kambéng saye lah banyak, lah beranak-pinak, lah beratus êko(r) jumlah die.

*Some kids walk around the stage.*

A—a sekarang, saye nak panggél kambéng kambéng saye. «»«»

Kambéng, o—i kambéng!

KAMBING: embê—êk, embê—êk, embê—êk, embê—êk, embê—êk

[Female performers act as sheeps].

WAK PAKIH JENANG: A—a inilah kambéng kambéng saye. «»

*Laughing and commenting on the sheep: ha ha itu kambingnye.*

A—a yang ini kambéng saye yang paling mude umo(r)nye, yang ni pulak, yang paling gemok, gedémpol, a—a cômêl kan, pandai menyanyi pulak. «»

*Laughing*

Aa kambéng, cobelah menyanyi.

KAMBING:

[Chorus sounds: embe—ek, along the song. Once finished singing, a chubby little boy performer makes movements in a comical way accompanied by drums]

Hai rumput hi—jau

Jadikan kambéng

Yang paling gendut senanglah makan

Sayelah kambing gemuk gedémpol

badan besa(r) banyaklah makan

*Roaring with laughter*

WAK PAKIH JENANG: iye kan, betul ape saye cakap, kambéng saye satu ni memang pandai. «»

A—a yang ni pulak kambéng saye yang paling malang nasib die, sebab dielah yang paling kuros, sebab die salah makan obat diet. «»

*Cameras flash*

Aa, kambéng kambéng semue, pegilah cari makan kat padang tu ye!

*Laughing loudly*

KAMBING: bile jam wak?

*Cameras flashed*

WAK PAKIH JENANG: Ai kan, saye dah cakap, kambéng kambéng saye ni pandai pandai. «»

[The sheep-acting actors crawl back to their



*Nyesu(r)*: may refer to *desur*, meaning whispering or a babbling sound (Iskandar 1986:258). The context implies that Wak Pakih Jenang wants to gossip in the neighboring village.

This is a mistake that Pembatak calls Wak Pakih Jenang “tok.”

This is a repetition about Gunung Berintan, Raja Johan Syah Nyaye, and Putri Rencane Mude, which is made in a different context and used to keep the audience and

Ini jam lah, pegi pegi pegi!

KAMBING: embe—ek, embe—ek, embe—ek!

WAK PAKIH JENANG: Baéklah, sayepun nak jalan jalan juga, saye nak nyesu(r)-nyesu(r) kat kampung sebelah. «»

Bejalan selalu cik o—i!

Berenti selalu cik o—i!

PEMBATAK: Éh, Assalamualaikum!

WAK PAKIH JENANG: Walaikumsalam! ☐☐☐☐•••

PEMBATAK: O iyalah Wak, Wak janganlah takot kepada saye, sebena(r)nye saye hanyelah orang yang sesat melarat kat kampung ni Wak.

Jadi sekali lagi janganlah takot kepada saye ye Wak! «»

Oh iyalah Wak, sebab saye datang kepada Wak ni saye nak betanye kepada Wak.

WAK PAKIH JENANG: Nak tanye ape?

PEMBATAK: Wak nampak tak gunung yang kat sane tu Wak?

WAK PAKIH JENANG: Yang mane?  
Mate wak ni dah rabon.

PEMBATAK: tu!  
Yang tinggi menjulang besa(r) tu Wak.

WAK PAKIH JENANG: O—o gunung itu kata?

PEMBATAK: O iyalah wak.  
Apekah name gunung tu ye Wak?

WAK PAKIH JENANG: Gunung itu bernama Gunung Berintan.

PEMBATAK: O—o Gunung Berintan, kata?

WAK PAKIH JENANG: Iye.

PEMBATAK: siapekah raje yang memerintah di Negeri Gunung Berintan itu ye Tok?

WAK PAKIH JENANG: Name raje die Raje Johan Syah Nyaye.

PEMBATAK: Raje Johan Syah Nyaye?

WAK PAKIH JENANG: Iye

PEMBATAK: apekah raje itu memiliki seorang putri ye Tok?

positions. A little girl actor tumbles as her scarf was stepped on by one of the other actors] *Roaring with laughter*

[Wak Pakih Jenang walks in circles accompanied by music but then encounters Pembatak]  
[Wak Pakih Jenang looks afraid of Pembatak and runs back]

[Pembatak and Wak Pakih Jenang were shaking hands]

*Cameras flash*

*Cameras flash*

*Chatting*

the performers in the storyline.

*Rencane*: a version of *kencane* or *kencana*.

*Kenchana*: gold (Wilkinson 1908:104).

In Sheppard's version, the princess is called Putri Ucana (Sheppard 1974a: 1-20)

In this case, Pembatak turns to call Wak Pakih Jenang "Tok," while Wak Pake Jenang returns to call Pembatak "Wak." This inconsistency is most probably unintentional.

*Hale*: direction.

*Taman Bunge*: the royal garden.

*Pekan Pesare*: marketplace.

*Kôta Raje*: the fortified city of the king.

WAK PAKIH JENANG: Ade Wak!

PEMBATAK: Kalau begitu siapaakah name putrinye?

WAK PAKIH JENANG: Name putri die, Tuan Putri Rencane Mude.

PEMBATAK: Tuan Putri Rencane Mude.

Baéklah kalau macam tu saye nak pegi dulu ye

WAK PAKIH JENANG: iye

PEMBATAK: manelah tau ade orang yang nak bagi saye duét kan.

WAK PAKIH JENANG: duét?

Wak, kalau wak dapat duét jangan lupe balék sini lagi!

PEMBATAK: Eh, kenape pulak Tok?

WAK PAKIH JENANG: Bagilah duét yang Wak dapat tu!

PEMBATAK: Eh, siapa yang dapat duét, siapa pulak yang sibuk nak minta bagi. «»

Ah udalah kalau macam tu saye nak pegi dulu ye.

WAK PAKIH JENANG: Iye

PEMBATAK: tapi sebelum saye pegi, saye nampak kat depan kite ade tige simpang.«»

Yang kiri menuju ke mane? «»

Yang kanan tu menuju ke mane? «»

Dan yang tengah ni pulak, ha ni tengah ni, ke mane hale tujunye?

WAK PAKIH JENANG: O—o macam tu? «»

Baéklah! «»«»

Kalau sempang yang ke kiri itu, menuju Taman Bunge, kalau sempang yang ke kanan ni, menuju Pekan Pesare, kalau yang tengah ni pulak, menuju Kôta Raje.

PEMBATAK: Baéklah kalau macam tu kalau, okelah, ini jam juga saye nak pegi e.

WAK PAKIH JENANG: Iye ati-ati!

PEMBATAK: Terime kasih, Asalamualaikum!

WAK PAKIH JENANG: Wa'alauikumsalam!

PEMBATAK: Baéklah pade waktu ketike ini saye nak bejalan jalan dahulu ke Taman Bunge. «»

Untuk apelah saye menadah tangan mengharap duit dari ôrang lain, sedangkan kat negeri saye tu semuenye ade, mulai dari emas, pêrak, intan, mutu, manikam, semuenye ade. «»

Baéklah kalau macam tu saye nak bejalan jalan dahulu!

*Chatting*

*Chatting*

*Audience chat with each other during this dialogue between Pembatak and Wak Pakih Jenang*

*Cameras flash*

*Cameras flash*

*Cameras flash*

[Music is played for changing the settings]

Bejalan selalu cik o—i!

Pembatak continues his wanderings in the direction of the royal garden, Taman Bunge, in which Princess Putri Rencana Muda and the ladies-in-waiting (*dayang-dayang*) are taking a bath in a pond. Starting this scene, a female performer steps to the middle part of the stage and begins acting.

PUTRI RENCANA MUDA: Baéklah pade waktu  
ketike ini sayelah yang bername Putri Rencane Mude.  
Baéklah pade waktu ketike ini, saye nak panggél Inang  
saye nak sayu Inang, saye nak ajak Inang kire bicare.

*Cameras flash*

O iyelah mu Inang, Inang o—i! □□□□••••

O iyelah mu Inang, Inang o—i! □□□□••••

O iyelah mu Inang, Inang o—i! □□□□••••

*Audience talks with each other about which actor is acting as Inang since there are two Inangs for two respective kingdoms.*

INANG PENGASUH: oi, siape tu panggil panggil  
Inang o—i?

*Comments: parah Inang!*

Nak besolék pun tak sempat lagi o—i.

PUTRI RENCANA MUDA: saye Inang!

INANG PENGASUH: eh Mak Senik, kata. <><>

Ade hajat berite mane Mak Senik?

PUTRI RENCANA MUDA: Inang, sebab saye panggil  
Inang kemari, saye ade hajat padamu ya Inang!

INANG PENGASUH: Ape hajat Mak Senik?

PUTRI RENCANA MUDA: Inang, sebab saye panggil  
Inang kemari, saye nak ajak dayang-dayang main  
dekat taman ye Inang.

INANG PENGASUH: Ajak dayang-dayang main  
dekat taman?

PUTRI RENCANA MUDA: Iye Inang.

INANG PENGASUH: Malas saye, tak ade lawan nak  
melawak lawak canték oi.

PUTRI RENCANA MUDA: Inang, Inang, lekaslah  
panggél dayang-dayang ye Inang!

INANG PENGASUH: Bile jam Mak Senik?

PUTRI RENCANA MUDA: Ini jam Inang!

INANG PENGASUH: Ini jam juge?

PUTRI RENCANA MUDA: Tapi Inang, Inang ajaklah  
Anak Temenggong, Anak Mangkubumi dan Anak  
Bendahare sekali ye Inang!

INANG PENGASUH: Anak Temenggong, Anak  
Mangkubumi, Anak Bendahare, anaknye sombong  
sombong semue e, tak endaklah Inang.

Tak sudi, tak sudi, tak sudi, tak sudi!

In Malacca tradition, the *bendahara* was the second and *temenggong* was the third office after Sultan. Bendahara is equivalent to the prime minister and temenggong is equivalent to a justice minister. However, in 19<sup>th</sup> century

Johor, these offices were related to territory (Trocki 1979:5).

*Mangkubumi*: a regent or viceroy, literally “nurse of the realm” (Wilkinson 1901:650, 1908:139).

*Seronok*: enjoyable

*Nyio(r) Gadéng*: a species of coconut that has a yellow nut.

*Pelayang* or *Kain Pelayang*: scarf that heavenly princesses wear, which appears in the other stories, such as *Wak Perambun*. This term is interchangeably used here with *seléndang* (scarf) by Inang Pengasuh.

The imagined coconut tree is played by the musicians. They talk as a choir to Inang pengasuh.

PUTRI RENCANA MUDA: Lekas inang!

INANG PENGASUH: Iyelah. <>>

Eh salah. <>><>><>>

Anak Temenggong!

ANAK TEMENGGUNG: Iye saye.

INANG PENGASUH: Anak Mangkubumi!

ANAK MANGKUBUMI: Iye saye.

INANG PENGASUH: Anak Datok Bendahare!

ANAK BENDAHARA: Iye saye.

INANG PENGASUH: Mak Senik nak ngajak kite maén-maén.

ANAK TEMENGGUNG, ANAK MANGKUBUMI,  
ANAK BENDAHARA: ha—a maén kat tama—n, i—h  
serônôknye.  
Bile jam Inang?

INANG PENGASUH: Kalau nak ajak main sibuk, ajak keje malas. <>>

Ini jam juge, cepat, cepat, cepat! <>><>><>>

Udah Mak Senik.

PUTRI RENCANA MUDA: o iyelah Inang. <>>  
Inang, tôlông letakkan seléndang kami dekat bawah  
Nyio(r) Gadéng ye inang, takut tesangkot pulak  
dekat pôkôk kayu. <>>  
Lekas Inang!

INANG PENGASUH:  
bukak pelayang satu,  
bukak pelayang due,  
bukak pelayang tige,  
bukak pelayang empat,  
bukak pelayang lima,  
bukak pelayang enam.

udah, udah! <>><>>  
o—i pokok Nyio(r) Gadéng!

NYIO GADÉNG: Iye saye

INANG PENGASUH: Eh, becakap pulak ni die. <>>  
Numpang letak kain pelayang ye!

NYIO GADÉNG: Tarok la—h, ilang tak tanggo—ng.

INANG PENGASUH: Ape pulak pasal tak tanggong  
tak tanggong ni, awak yang pegang kain pelayang  
ni.

*Cameras flash*

[Inang walks in the wrong direction but turns to the spot she wanted]

*Cameras flash*

*Chuckling*

[Inang and five actresses come to see Putri Rencana Muda]

Inang is singing while taking off the scarfs that the princess and dayangs wear.

[Inang faces the musicians and acts like she is talking with the coconut tree]  
[Musicians reply]

[Musicians reply]

[Inang acts like she is putting the scarf on a coconut tree]

Saye numpang tarok, janganlah sampai ilang pulak!

NYIO GADING: Iyela—h

Musicians answer

PUTRI RENCANA MUDA: lekas Inang!

INANG PENGASUH: Iye Mak Senik, saba(r)lah sikit  
ai ma—k. «»

Lah sudahlah Mak Senik.

PUTRI RENCANA MUDA: oiye lah Inang. «»

*Cuco(r)*: a rattan stick. It is that kind of stick that beats the drum.

Ringgit: dancing girl (Wilkinson 1932); currency, 100 cents (Iskandar 1986:982).

*Tudong saji*: a dish-cover (Iskandar 1986: 1009).

*Indong*: mother.

gendanglah dicuco(r)— lah saya—ng  
teringgét lah ringgé—t  
gendanglah dicuco(r)— lah sa—ya—ng  
hai teringgét lah ringgé—t

yang seringgé—t, yang seringgé—t di tudong sa—ji  
alah indo—ng, da—ngko—ng  
anaklah raje turun bermaé—n

gendanglah dicuco(r)— lah saya—ng  
teringgét lah ringgé—t  
gendanglah dicuco(r)— lah sa—ya—ng  
hai teringgét lah ringgé—t

yang seringgé—t, yang seringgé—t di tudong sa—ji  
alah indo—ng, dangko—ng  
anaklah raje turun bermaé—n

kami endak maé—n lah saya—ng di taman lah raje—  
kami endak maé —n lah saya—ng di taman lah raje—  
maénlah dengan, maén dengan saudare mare  
alah indong, dangko—ng  
anaklah raje turun bermaé—n

kami endak maé —n lah saya—ng di taman lah raje—  
kami endak maé —n lah saya—ng di taman lah raje—  
maénlah dengan, maén dengan saudare mare  
alah indong, dangko—ng  
anaklah raje turun bermaé—n

[Putri Rencana Muda and five dayangs make a smaller half-circle formation. The princess takes the lead to sing and dance accompanied by music].

[Chorus follows the lead in singing and dancing, swaying arms horizontally to the left and right sides consecutively. Wrists rotate out and push the palms forward with the fingers upward].

[Chorus follows the lead in singing while repeating the movement]

[Chorus follows the lead]

[Pembatak steals the scarfs]

PUTRI RENCANA MUDA: Inang, tólông ambekkan  
selêndang kami ye Inang!

INANG PENGASUH: Selêndang Mak Senik?

PUTRI RENCANA MUDA: Iye Inang

INANG PENGASUH: Manelah selêndang-selêndang  
itu ye, kat mane— lah  
o—i pôkôk Nyio(r) Gadéng

NYIO GADING: o—i

A musician answered

INANG PENGASUH: mane kain pelayang tadi?

NYIO GADING: Tak tau!

INANG PENGASUH: Eh, ngape tak de.

PUTRI RENCANA MUDA: lekas Inang!

INANG PENGASUH: Mak Senik, Mak Senik minta maaf Mak Senik!

PUTRI RENCANA MUDA: ape Inang?

INANG PENGASUH: Kain pelayang tak ade

PUTRI RENCANA MUDA: Ih macam mane Inang, Inang pegi cari lah Inang!

INANG PENGASUH: Cari dekat mane?

PUTRI RENCANA MUDA: Lekas Inang, cari Inang!

INANG PENGASUH: Bang Batak!  
Eh, Bang Batak, boléh tak balékkkan kaén pelayang kami tu?

INANG PENGASUH: o—i, o—i

PUTRI RENCANA MUDA: ape Inang?

Ape? □□□□••••

[Inang sees Pembatak and comes closer to him]

[Pembatak points at the princess with his finger as sign to communicate]  
*Cameras flash*

Figure 5.17  
Pembatak steals Putri Rencana Muda's and dayang's scarfs in the royal garden (right end).



Figure 5.18 Inang wants to catch Pembatak while removing the princess's ring. But he eventually succeeds.



INANG PENGASUH: Die nak kawin dengan Mak Senik!

PUTRI RENCANA MUDA: Tak endak Inang, saye tak endak kawin dengan die.

Inang ajelah pegi kawin dengan die sane!

Pegi Inang, lekas inang!

INANG PENGASUH: Inang walau muke macam ni pun miléh miléh jugak lah. <><><>

Eh, Bang Batak, oi, argh, argh. <><><>

Inang takut muke die macam hantu Mak Senik!

PUTRI RENCANA MUDA: Jadi macam mane Inang?

Ha, Anak Temenggong ajelah pegi, pegi sane!

ANAK TEMENGGUNG: Bang Batak, endak tak kawin dengan saye?

ANAK TEMENGGUNG: hi ih, Mak Senik, die nakkan cincin yang ade di tangan Mak Senik

PUTRI RENCANA MUDA: Ah, tak nak, Inang, Inang macam mane Inang, saye tak endak Inang, macam mane ni Inang?

[Inang comes back to the princess with a gesture showing fear]

*Cameras flash*  
*Laughing*

[Inang tries to go to Pembatak but returns to Mak Senik in fear]

[Using sign language, Pembatak tells that he wants the Princess's ring]

*Chuckling*

*Kacip*: betel-nut scissors  
(Wilkinson 1908:93)

INANG PENGASUH: Ah, sini, sini, <><><>  
Nanti, Mak Senik pure-pure nak ngasi cincin tu. <>  
Nanti Inang kacip tangan die, Inang punye kacip sakti,  
die tak nampak. <>  
Ha itu die.

PUTRI RENCANA MUDA: o iyalah Inang, lekas  
Inang!

INANG PENGASUH: Tak usah takotlah Mak Senik  
ye.

PUTRI RENCANA MUDA: lekas Inang!

[Inang and dayangs  
prepare to trap  
Pembatak]

INANG PENGASUH: Mane mane, tu tôleng  
ambekkan kacip Inang, <><><><>  
ha ini tak nampak die, ha.

PUTRI RENCANA MUDA: Inang, tangan saye Inang.

INANG PENGASUH: ah mane die?

Oi Bang Batak, <>

Bang Batak ambil la cincinnya, kalau pandai! <><><><>  
Aah, aduh, aduh.

[Pembatak comes closer  
to take the princess's  
ring]

PEMBATAK: hei ade gajah terbang!

[Pembatak averts their  
eyes and takes off the  
ring]

INANG PENGASUH: tak kenak?

PUTRI RENCANA MUDA: Tak kenak Inang.

Inang saye takut, marilah kite balék aje ye Inang ye!

INANG PENGASUH: iye, iye, iye.

Balék selalu cik o—i!

This part ends with the  
return of the princess to  
the royal palace to relate  
to her father. The trip is  
the indication of the  
change of setting.

## 6. The capture of Raja Bungsu Sakti by Raja Johan Syah Nyaya



Putri Rencana Muda, Inang Pengasuh, and Dayang return to the king's palace, Lédang Balai, to relate what had just happened. Once hearing his daughter's report, Raja Jôhan Syah Nyaya takes action. He gives an order to his men—the general Datuk Panglima and the chief of marketplace Datuk Pengulu Pekan—to arrest Pembatak. Putri Rencana Muda relates to his father about Pembatak and describes what he looks like: dirty, smelly, and creepy. The time is 10:44 pm, and this episode lasts for 7 and a half minutes.

Figure 5.19 Putri Rencana Muda reports to her father about Pembatak who robbed her ring.

PUTRI RENCANA MUDA: Baéklah pade waktu  
ketike ini saye hendak menghadap ayah saye Raje  
Jôhan Syah Nyaye.

Bejalan selalu cik o—i!

[The princess walks in  
circles on the stage.  
After one round she

	Berenti selalu cik o—i! «»	stops]
	Anande datang Ayahande	
	RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: hajat mane berite mane Anande datang menghadap?	
This is the image of Pembatak: a creepy face and bumpy head.	PUTRI RENCANA MUDA: Ayahande, tadi Ananda main dekat taman, Ananda bejumpe Ôrang Tak Serupa Ôrang Hantu Tak Serupa Hantu mukenye menggerutu Ayahande. «»	
	Cincin Anande pun telah dirampasnye Ayahande.	
Panglime: military commander.	RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: Ape? «»	Cameras flash
	Baéklah Anande, kalau begitu Anande baléklah dulu, Ayahanda akan memanggél Datok Panglime.	
	PUTRI RENCANA MUDA: baéklah Ayahande. «»	[The princess moves back to sit in the performers lineup accompanied by music]
	Balék selalu cik oi!	
Bêta or bête (used interchangeably): I, is not used as often in mak yong as it is in bangsawan theatre performance.	RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: baéklah, pade waktu ketike ini, bêtalah yang bernama Raje Jôhan Syahnyaye. «»	
	Bêtalah yang memerintah di Negeri Gunung Berintan ini. «»«»	Cameras flash
	Baéklah di sini tempat bête hendak memanggil Datok Panglime. «»	Cameras flash
	Oh iyalah Datok, silelah menghadap!	
Paték: I, used by the subjects to talk to the royal family members.	DATOK PANGLIMA: O iyalah Tuanku, saye datang menghadap! «»«»«»	[A performer stands up and comes forward]
	Ampun beribu ampun sembah paték harap diampun, hajat mane berite mane tuanku manggél hambe?	[The commander is kneeling to the king]
The repetition of the description of Pembatak reminds the audience about the focus of this episode and keeps them in its story line.	RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: Sebab bête memanggél Datok kemari, bête hendak memerintahkan Datok untuk menangkap Ôrang Tak Serupe Ôrang Hantu Tak Serupe Hantu, muke die menggerutu Datok. «»	
This description brings to mind a horrific punishment, ruthless, and dirty, which either confirms the king as “nyaye” (unjust and cruel) or conveys a message to the people about the consequences for disobedience.	Kalau dapat Datok, Datok tangkap die dan masukkan die dalam penjare, jangan beri die makan, jangan beri die minum. Tempatkan die di tempat bêtak kencingnya Tuan Putri Rencane Mude. «»	
	Biarkan die sampai mati!	
	DATOK PANGLIMA: Baéklah kalau begitu Tuanku. Tapi ini mesti bukan sembarang ôrang, ini mesti ôrang yang berilmu. «»	Chatting
	Jadi sangat susah untuk menangkapnye Tuanku.	
Arak: arrack Candu: opium	RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: begini saje Datok. Datok ajak die minum arak, Datok suroh die isap candu, buat die tetido(r) tak sada(r)kan diri. «»	Cameras flash
It seems clear in the play that everything that will	Lepas tu Datok tangkap die, Datok ikat kedue tangan die, Datok masukkan ke dalam penjare tempat	Chatting



happen is already revealed in advance as a clue. The audience, in this sense, are waiting for the performers to act out what has been foreshadowed.

This shift from actor to narrator and back, or, from narrator to actor, appears throughout the play. The formula, *baéklah*, helps the actor to take on the role of narrator.

This is the repetition of their plan that foreshadows what is going to happen.

bêrak kencingnye Tuan Putri Rencane Mude. «»  
Itulah siasatnya Datok.

Hehahahaha  
Hehehahahaha

DATOK PANGLIMA: baéklah kalau begitu Tuanku.  
Saye môhôn ijin bergerak dulu.

RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: baéklah Datok!

DATOK PANGLIMA: baéklah pade waktu ketike ini,  
sayelah Datok Panglime di kerajaan Gunong  
Berintan. «»«»

*Cameras flash*

Baéklah sebelum saye menangkap ôrang tersebut, saye  
nak panggél Wak Pengulu Pekan. «»

*Cameras flash*

Saye nak ajak die untuk menangkap ôrang tersebut.  
«»«»

Oh iyelah Wak Pengulu Pekan, Wak o—i! ••••

WAK PENGULU PEKAN: o iyelah Datok, ape hajat  
memanggil Wak ni?

[A little boy comes up  
acting as Pengulu Pekan]  
*Laughing*

DATOK PANGLIMA: Begini Wak, kite diperintahkan  
raje untuk menangkap orang sakti.

*Cameras flash*

WAK PENGULU PEKAN: bagaimana carenye supaye  
kite dapat menangkap, Datok? «»«»  
Sebab die orang sakti dan berilmu.

*Cameras flash*

DATOK PANGLIMA: begini Wak. «»  
Kite ajak die minum arak, sampai die mabuk, kite ajak  
die isap candu sampai die péngsan. «»  
Baru kite ikat kedue kaki dan tangan die dan kite  
masokkan die kedalam penjare.

[A little chubby boy  
acting as Wak Pengulu  
Pekan's brother comes to  
join]

*Cameras flash*

WAK PENGULU PEKAN: O—h begitu, kata! «»  
Baéklah kalau begitu, marilah kite mencari arak dan  
candu dulu.

DATOK PANGLIMA: baéklah kalau begitu Wak,  
marilah! «»  
Bejalan selalu cik o—i!

[Datok Panglima, Wak  
Pengulu Pekan and his  
brother walk circles on  
the stage as an act of  
going to look for arak  
and candu]

Berenti selalu cik o—i!

DATOK PANGLIMA: Ah Wak, kite gelar tika(r) di  
sini aje Wak e, biasenye die lewat sini! «»«»«»  
Kite atur siasat, ini arak betol ini arak tipu-tipu, nanti  
Wak minum, Wak pure-pure mabok. «»«»  
Ha lepas tu saye bagikan candu.

[The three sit and are  
waiting for Pembatak to  
pass by]

WAK PENGULU PEKAN: ha, yah!  
Ha Dek, kite minum ni Dek e!

ADIK WAK PENGULU PEKAN: Tak nak la. «»

*Laughing*

Adek biase minum susu!

DATOK PANGLIMA: Mane Bang Batak? <><><>

<< >>

## Mane Bang Batak? <><>

Itu die orangnye Wak, itu Wak! «>»

Panggil die kesini Wak!

WAK PENGULU PEKAN: Oi Bang Batak,

sini lah dulu! <>>

Mari kite besenang ômba—k!

DATOK PANGLIMA: Betul Bang Batak.

Marilah sini dulu, mari kite minum arak dulu, dah itu kite isap candu dulu!

PEMBATAK: éh, arak?

Candu?

DATOK PANGLIMA: Iye!

PEMBATAK: Ha, mari mari mari!

DATOK PANGLIMA: Ha Wak, kasi die minum arak  
Wak, yang kecil dulu!

WAK PENGULU PEKAN: Bang Batak, minum arak  
Bang Batak!

[The performer acting as Pembatak stands up from the actors lineup]

[Pembatak drinks from  
an imaginary bottle]

DATOK PANGLIMA: sedap Bang Batak?

*Cameras flash*

PEMBATAK: Ah lagi lagi lagi, sekali lagi!

Cameras flash

WAK PENGULU PEKAN: Ha Bang Batak, ini arak  
yang besa(r) Bang Batak.

PEMBATAK: mana, mana?

WAK PENGULU PEKAN: Ha ni Bang Batak, ha  
tahan Bang Batak! □□⊗⊗•••

[Pembatak drinks from  
an imaginary big bottle]

DATOK PANGLIMA: Ha tido(r) Bang Batak, tido(r)!

◀▶

## Candu Bang Batak?

PEMBATAK: ha candu boléh lah!

DATOK PANGLIMA: ha ini candunye Bang Batak.  
Isap Bang Batak!

WAK PENGULU PEKAN: Baring Bang Batak!

ADIK WAK PENGULU PEKAN: Tidor la, tidor la,  
tidor la, tidor la!

*Laughing*

DATOK PANGLIMA: sekali lagi Bang Batak! <>><>>

Isap lagi Bang Batak! <><>

Sekali lagi Bang Batak! <><><>

Wak cepat Wak, udah pêngsan Wak.

Cepat Wak!

There is no clue why Pembatak's magical power does not function here to anticipate the deception, as it did with Inang's trick in the garden, or if it does not work against the toxins of opium and arrack.

Another repetition of the punishment shortly before execution.

WAK PENGULU PEKAN: Mari kite masukkan die penjara besi, tempat bêrak kencingnye Tuan Putri Rencane Mude.

DATOK PANGLIMA: Baéklah Wak.

ADIK WAK PENGULU PEKAN: Tidor la, tidor la, tidor la, tidor la!

The move back to the palace indicates the end of this section.

DATOK PANGLIMA: Balék selalu cik o—i!

[Wak Pengulu Pekan and Datuk Panglima carry Pembatak]

*Laughing*



Figure 5.20 Raja Johan Syah Nyaya of Gunung Berintan presents himself arrogantly.



Figure 5.21 Datuk Panglima, Wak Pengulu Pekan and his brother are deceived by Pembatak, who got drunk and fainted.

## 7. The tiger's rampage in Gunung Berintan



Raja Bungsu Sakti is arrested in Gunung Berintan. While in Lenggang Cahaya, his mother, Jerak Jentare, goes to the royal garden and finds the Selasih Perak withered. She knows that this signifies the hardship of her son. She incarnates into an ordinary man and goes to Gunung Berintan to see Raja Bungsu Sakti in jail and promises him to take revenge. Then, she incarnates into a tiger to attack the people of Gunung Berintan when they are clearing land in the forest to make a new field. Jerak Jentare's wanderings begin from her hunch about something bad happening, and so she checks the selasih tree that her son planted. The time is 10:52 pm and this episode lasts for 17 and a half minutes.

Figure 5.22 Raja Bungsu Sakti's mother Jerak Jentare changes her appearance to an unknown man to start roaming to Gunung Berintan, where she morphs into a tiger, creating havoc.

MAK SENIK: Baéklah pade waktu ketike ini sayelah yang bernama Permaisuri Jerak Jentare. <>>

*Cameras flash*

Baéklah di sini tempat saye nak panggél Inang, saye nak sayu Inang, saye nak ajak Inang kire bicare.

O iyelah mu Inang, Inang o—i! □□•••

O iyelah mu Inang, Inang o—i! □□•••

INANG PENGASUH: Ish, siapa lagi lah manggil Inang ni ha— ? <>>

Orang baru nak pegi *shopping*. <>>

Orang baru besolék, baru pakai gincu, tak endak lalu orang tenang agaknya. *Chatting*

MAK SENIK: iye Inang

*Gundah-gulana*: feeling melancholy, brooding.

INANG PENGASUH: O— Mak Senik kata,  
hajat mane berite mane Mak Senik manggil Ina—ng  
Mak Senik?

MAK SENIK: Inang, saye merase gundah-gulana  
Inang. «»

Saye teringat anande saye yang telah merantau ke  
negeri ôrang. «»

Saye nak ajak Inang pegi ke taman, kite têngôk  
Selasih Pêrak dan Selasih Emas yang anande  
saye tanam sebagai pertande.

INANG PENGASUH: O iyalah Mak Senik, marilah  
kite pegi Mak Senik.

MAK SENIK: ke taman selalu cik o—i!

[Inang and Mak Senik  
walk in circles on the  
stage]  
*Cameras flash*

Berenti selalu cik o—i! «»  
Inang!

INANG PENGASUH: O iyalah Mak Senik

MAK SENIK: kite sudahpun sampai di taman. «»  
Inang tôleng bukakan pintu taman ye!

*Cameras flash*

INANG PENGASUH: Pintu taman ye Mak Senik?

MAK SENIK: O iyalah Inang!

INANG PENGASUH: Sebenta(r) ye Mak Senik,  
Inang cari kunci dulu.

MAK SENIK: Inang ilangkan kunci lagi ye?

INANG PENGASUH: Ah, itulah Inang ni pelupe  
Mak Senik.  
Inang cari dulu ye.

*Cameras flash*

MAK SENIK: lekas Inang!

INANG PENGASUH: Aa mudah-mudahan dapat,  
sekejap aje ini ha. «»  
Mane kunci, kunci mane—?

[Inang repeatedly walks  
from left to right]

MAK SENIK: lekas Inang!

INANG PENGASUH: sebenta(r) Mak Senik.  
Kemarin selit kat telinge, mane lagi Inang simpan  
ye, kat celana kolo(r) tak mungkin pulak lagi,  
em. «»

*Selit*: to insert in between;  
jammed between two  
surfaces (Wilkinson  
1908:198).

*Laughing*

Oh, Inang tak lupe sebab Inang tarok dalam kutang.  
«»

*Kutang*: bra

Ah, ini die kunci die Mak Senik!

MAK SENIK: Jumpe Inang?

INANG PENGASUH: Jumpe lah Mak Senik, Inang  
tarok dalam kutang ha.

	MAK SENIK: jaohnye Inang simpan!	
<i>Celuk</i> : to dip something inside	INANG PENGASUH: Mane jaoh, celuk sikit aje pun!	<i>Laughing loudly</i>
	MAK SENIK: O iyelah Inang, lekaslah Inang bukak pintu paga(r) Inang !	
	INANG PENGASUH: sebenta(r) ye Mak Senik ye. Mak Senik kene besaba(r) Inang nak bukak. «» Pintu mane pintu, ah ini pintu, sebenta(r) ye Mak Senik ye. «»«»«» ☒•	<i>Cameras flash</i>
	Ei Mak Seni—k, Mak Seni—k, hu—u hu—u ☐☐☐☐•••• ☐☐☐☐••••	
	MAK SENIK: kenapa Inang? Bunyi ape itu?	
	INANG PENGASUH: Pi-, pi- Pintu taman roboh Mak Senik!	
	MAK SENIK: Macam mane Inang buka sampe roboh Inang?	<i>Laughing loudly</i>
It is not unusual in this play that complaints about royalty are conveyed through jokes or comical things like Awang also does. <i>Orang kerajaan</i> : servants of the royal house.	INANG PENGASUH: Itulah Inang peninglah nak gobék gobék nêngôk ôrang kerajaan ni tak ade lalu yang nak betolkan Mak Senik, pening e. «»«» Silelah Mak Senik masuk! «»«»«»«» Mak Senik, silelah Mak Senik masuk Mak Senik!	<i>Cameras flash</i> [Inang prepares a pot with two selasih on stage]
	MAK SENIK: Inang!	
	INANG PENGASUH: Kenape Mak Senik?	
	MAK SENIK: Inang têngok Selaséh Pêrak tu layu Inang.	
	INANG PENGASUH: ha, Selaséh, kenapa dengan Selaséh ni, ya Allah.	
	MAK SENIK: Inang, lekas ambekkan aé(r) Inang!	
<i>Aé(r)</i> : water. It is understandable that the performer tries to attract the audience's attention by mentioning them or asking about them after about two hours of the performance.	INANG PENGASUH: Aé(r) aé(r) ah, mane aé(r). Ah ah, Raje ade aé(r), penonton ade aé(r) tak, mane aé(r) ni? Aa ni die aé(r), Mak Senik inilah.	<i>Laughing loudly</i>
	MAK SENIK: siram selalu cik o—i! «»«»«»«»	[Mak Senik waters the Selasih Pêrak. Music accompaniment is played]
	Inang, Inang têngôklah Inang, saye udah siram, tapi Selaséh Pêrak tu tetap layu Inang!	
	INANG PENGASUH: ih kenapa dengan Selaséh Pêrak ni Mak Senik? «»	<i>Cameras flash</i>
	Idoplah Selaséh Pêrak, idoplah, ah!	
	MAK SENIK: Ini petande burok Inang!	
	INANG PENGASUH: ha? «»«»	

	Petande ape Mak Senik?	
	MAK SENIK: Saye harus cari anande saye Inang!	
<i>Gegar: shaking</i>	INANG PENGASUH: O iyalah Mak Senik, Inang jadi takot, gega(r) badan Inang. «» Macam mane care Mak Senik nak mencari anande Mak Senik ni?	
	MAK SENIK: Saye akan beralih lupe, rupe menjadi orang yang tidak dikenal Inang.	<i>Cameras flash</i>
	INANG PENGASUH: ape? «» Saktinye Mak Senik boleh beralih rupe menjadi orang tak dikenal.	
	MAK SENIK: Inang!	
	INANG PENGASUH: Iye Mak Senik	
	MAK SENIK: Inang jagelah kerajaan kite baék-baék dan tunggu sampai saye balék ye.	
	INANG PENGASUH: ah tak nak lah Mak Senik. Inang setie dengan Mak Senik, Inang nak jage dan ikot dengan Mak Senik ke manepun Mak Senik melangkah.	
	MAK SENIK: Inang, Inang balék ye!	
	INANG PENGASUH: tak nak Mak Senik, Inang pôkôknye nak, nak ikot Mak Senik ke manepun Mak Senik melangkah.	
	Inang nak jage Mak Senik	
	MAK SENIK: kalau Inang ikut saye siapa jage istane kite?	
	INANG PENGASUH: Bia(r) ajelah ôrang-ôrang sane jage.	<i>Cameras flash</i>
	Inang pôkôknye nak teman Mak Senik e.	
	MAK SENIK: balék Inang lekas!	
	INANG PENGASUH: Tak nak Mak Senik, Inang takot nanti Mak Senik kenapa-nape.	
	MAK SENIK: ini titah perintah saye Inang!	
	INANG PENGASUH: Tapi Mak Senik!	
	MAK SENIK: Balék!	
<i>Melengking: scream of anger.</i>	INANG PENGASUH: Mak Senik, tak pernah Mak Senik melengkéng dengan Inang. «» Balék lah balék balék. □□□□.... Balék lah balék balék. □□□□.... Ôrang sedih pun nak gendang teros!	<i>Cameras flash</i> <i>Laughing loudly</i> [After Inang got her position in the line up of actors, music continues to play] [A performer comes to
	MAK SENIK: Baéklah pade waktu ketike ini saye	

*Besarong*: to cover one's body.

nak mengalih rupe menjadi ôrang tidak dikenal,  
saye akan besarong.

Mengalih selalu cik o—i!

ORANG TAK DIKENAL: Baéklah pade waktu  
ketike ini saye telahpun mengalih rupe menjadi  
orang yang tak dikenal. «»

Saye hendak mencari di mane anande saye Raje  
Bungsu Sakti berade. «»«»

Baéklah kalau begitu saye hendak bejalan-jalan  
dahulu. «»

Jalan selalu cik o—i!

Berenti selalu cik o—i!

Baéklah pade waktu ketike ini saye telahpun sampai  
di sebuah perkampungan. «»

Saye hendak bertanye pade orang yang lalu-lalang di  
sini, manelah tau di antara mereke ade yang  
tenampak di mane anande saye berade! «»«»«»

Mak Cik Mak Cik, boléhkah saye tumpang  
bertanye?

MAK CIK: Tuan hambe nak tanye, tanyelah!

ORANG TAK DIKENAL: Makcik, saye nampak  
gunong tu—u Makcik,

Ape name gunong tu Mak Cik dan siapaakah name  
raje yang memerintah negeri ini Mak Cik?

MAK CIK: Oh, gunung tu bename Gunung  
Berintan.

Raja yang memerintahkan di gunung ini bename  
Raje Jôhan Syah Nyaye.

ORANG TAK DIKENAL: oh, begitu kata!

Begini Mak Cik,  
apekah raje memiliki seôrang putri Mak Cik?

MAK CIK: Oh, ade, putri tersebut bernama Putri  
Rencane Mude.

ORANG TAK DIKENAL: Mak Cik Mak Cik,  
apekah raje memerintah dengan adil dan  
bijaksane?

MAK CIK: Oh, Raje Jôhan Syah Nyaye bukanlah  
raje baék, die sedikit kejam, tidak berlaku arif  
dan bijaksane.

ORANG TAK DIKENAL: Mak Cik Mak Cik,  
Apekah Mak Cik pernah tenampak ade ôrang asing  
sebelum saye yang datang ke sini Mak Cik?

MAK CIK: Em, ade Tuan hambe, tapi...

Mak Senik. They stand  
back to back with each  
other and exchange  
positions. See figure 5.22]

*Cameras flash*

[The performer circles the  
stage accompanied by  
music]

[The performer observes  
the surroundings and walks  
in circles on the stage]

This is exactly the same  
way to what Pembatak did,  
as a repetition but in  
different context. This  
helps create an imagined  
setting, the landscape.

The negative  
characteristics of Raja  
Johan Syah Nyaya are  
already hinted by his  
name.

This repetition  
foreshadows what is going  
to happen.

These two expressions  
(*alang-alang basah...*;  
*alang-alang menceluk...*)  
imply that once you start to  
work already, then  
continue until you  
accomplish it, even if it is  
unpleasant and regardless  
of the risks you might  
encounter.  
Literally: *alang-alang  
menceluk pekasam...*  
(when your arm dips into a  
fishtub, put it in to the  
elbow, no matter how  
smelly it is).  
*Padang jarak, padang  
tekukur*: “a tract of waste  
land” (Wilkinson  
1908:154)

ORANG TAK DIKENAL: tapi kenapa Mak Cik?

MAK CIK: Ôrang tersebut telah ditangkap dan  
disiksa oleh Raje Jôhan Syahnyaye. «»

Bukan itu saja Mak Tuan hambe, ôrang itu akan  
dimasokkan ke dalam penjara besi tempat bêrak  
kencingnye Tuan Putri Rencane Mude dan tidak  
akan diberi makan dan minum.

ORANG TAK DIKENAL: oh, begitu kata! «»  
Terime kasih Mak Cik.

MAK CIK: sama sama Tuan hambe!

ORANG TAK DIKENAL: Sunggoh biadab Raje  
Johan Syah Nyaye, anande hambe Raje Bungsu  
Sakti sudah dipermalukan. «»

Saya akan menuntut balas, ya, saya akan menuntut  
balas. «»

Alang-alang basah biar mandi sekali.

Alang-alang menceluk pekasam, biar sampai ke  
pangkal lengan. «»

Akan saye balas, ye, akan saye balas. «»

Akan saye jadikan padang jarak padang cekukur  
negeri Gunong Berintan ini! □□□□••••

Baéklah pade waktu ketike ini, saye hendak  
mengaléh rupe menjadi seêkor harimau yang  
besar dan ganas, saya akan hamôkkan negeri ini.  
«»

Ye, inilah tempat yang paling tepat untuk  
meluluhlantakkan negeri ini. «»

Mengaléh selalu cik o—i!

HARIMAU: Aarh, aarh. «»«»«»«»

Aarh, arhh.

Baéklah kalau begitu saye hendak bersembunyi  
dahulu.

Sembunyi selalu cik o—i!

[The performer wears a  
tiger mask. Music  
dramatises this  
transformation]

When the tiger is hiding, another situation develops. In the royal palace of Negeri Gunung Berintan, Raja Jôhan Syah Nyaya instructs his military commander, Datuk Panglima, to open a new field in the forest. The commander organises people to clear the land located next to the jungle. When the process takes place, the tiger comes out and attacks the people. This version differs from that of Mantang's version, in which the tiger is one of Raja Bungsu Sakti's siblings whom his mother summons to create havoc. Another sibling is Gorda or Garuda, whom his mother calls as well after the tiger. In the Mantang version, Raja Bungsu Sakti is the youngest (*bungsu*) one among three children of Jerak Jentara. However, Said Parman changed it and removed two other siblings from the play to shorten it. He also made Jerak Jentara the tiger.

RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: Baéklah, pade  
waktu ketike ini bête hendak memanggil Datok  
Panglime.



Such manners and royal audience scenes are usually reserved for bangsawan theatre.

It may be the forest or bush bordering the village (*sebelah kampung*).

Oh iyalah Datok, silelah menghadap!

DATOK PANGLIMA: Oh iyalah Tuanku, saye datang menghadap! <><><><><>

Ampun beribu ampun sembah paték harap diampun. Hajat mane berite mane Tuanku memanggél hambe?

[Datuk Panglima comes to see Raja Johan Syah Nyaya]

RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: Sebab bête memanggél Datuk kemari, bête endak memerintahkan Datok untuk membawe beberapa ôrang untuk menebas kampung sebelah, untuk dapat kite becôcôk tanam.

Datok beri due sampai tige keping emas sesuai dengan kadar kerjenye.

DATOK PANGLIMA: Baéklah kalau begitu Tuanku, silelah Tuanku besenang angin besenang ômbak!

RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: Baéklah Datok!

DATOK PANGLIMA: Baéklah saye nak belari biar saye cepat sampai. <>

Saye nak cari ôrang- ôrang kampung untuk suruh bekerje. <>

Belari selalu cik o—i!

[Datuk Panglima runs in circles on the stage]

DATOK PANGLIMA: Berenti selalu cik o—i!

Baéklah saye sudahpun sampai. <><>

Waha—i penduduk kampo—ng!

kite diperitahkan raje untuk menebas dan mencangkol ladang di kampung sebela—h!

barang siapa yang dapat bekerje akan dibagi due sampai tige keping emas sebagai upa—h!

<><><><><>

[Two male and five female actors act as people who come to Datuk Panglima]

Baéklah kalau begitu, marilah kite ke ladang kampung sebelah!

Bejalan selalu cik o—i!

[They circle the stage as if going to the intended destination]

Berenti selalu cik o—i!

Baéklah kite sudahpun sampai. <>

Marilah kite mulai menebas dengan cangkul!

HARIMAU: arh, arh, aarrh.

□□□•••

[The tiger appears and tries to attack the people]

DATOK PANGLIMA: jangan lari, mari kite lawan harimau tu!

ORANG KAMPONG 1: Tak naklah.

DATOK PANGLIMA: pasti die kalah

ORANG KAMPONG 1: tak nak la Datok, saye pun dah tue.

Datok ajelah!

ORANG KAMPONG 2: Saye aje, saye aje!

[a man comes to the fore to fight the tiger]

DATOK PANGLIMA: cepat!

HARIMAU: Arh, arh, aarh.

[the tiger attacks the man and kills him]

DATOK PANGLIMA: yang lain jangan lari !  
Mari kite lawan harimau tu !

WAK PENGULU PEKAN: Datok Panglima,  
Ade lebih baék kite balek, kite adukan kepade Raja.  
Lihat harimau sudah banyak memakan kôrban.

DATOK PANGLIMA: baéklah kalau begitu Wak,  
marilah!

Balék selalu cik o—i!

Datuk Panglima and the people head back and report the case to Raja Johan Syah Nyaya. The tensions are escalating as the tiger rampages. The plot is moved faster at this point since the time was 11:05 pm, and one third of the audience had already left. However, the performance went on and the performers wanted speeded up the play. The story now goes. The tiger tries to sneak into the place where Raja Bungsu Sakti is imprisoned.

HARIMAU: baéklah, kalau begitu saye hendak  
menyusop masok tempat penjare besi tempat  
anande saye dikurong. <><><><>

[The cast acting as Pembatak sits on stage and puts a prop representing a cage in front of him. (See figure 5.24)]

Baéklah!

Mengaléh selalu cik o—i!

ORANG TAK DIKENAL: Baéklah saye telah sudah  
telahpun mengaléh rupa. <>

Saye hendak mencari di mana ananda saye dikurong.  
<><><><>

[The performer circles the stage]

Ha ah ah Anande e—e malang benar nasibmu wahai  
putra Mak Bonde.

Malang benar nasibmu na—k!

PEMBATAK: o iyalah Tuanku, maafkan saye.  
Tapi siape sebena(r)nye Tuanku, dan mengape  
Tuanku menyebut diri Tuanku dengan sebutan  
bonde.

ORANG TAK DIKENAL: Anande tak kenal siape  
Mak Bonde?

Ini Mak Bonde, putre Mak Bonde.

Ini Bonde, Anande!

PEMBATAK: maafkan saye Tuanku, tapi bonde  
saye tak macam ni paras rupenye!

ORANG TAK DIKENAL: baéklah, tunggu sekejap  
ya Anande! <>

Rupenye Bonde lupe mengaléh rupe. <><><><>

Mengaléh selalu cik o—i!

[A performer comes to

*Membasuh arang di muke:*  
to remove shame.  
*Mencuci karat di hati:*  
To get rid of resentment.  
Jerak Jentare is committed  
to taking revenge to  
remove disgrace.

Once the tiger is hiding,  
the actor playing Pembatak  
stands up to act out but  
hesitated. After 14  
seconds, he was sitting  
again. It seemed as if the  
performers were confused  
with what came next.  
Some mistakes in the next  
episodes indicate this  
confusion.

PEMBATAK: Bonde ! <><><>

Bonde ! <><><>

Bonde, Anande teramat rindu kepademu Bonde. <>

Bonde lihatlah nasib anande sekarang Bonde. <>

Raje Johan Syah Nyanye telahpun menyikse  
Anande, Bonde.

Orang Tak Dikenal. They  
stand back to back with  
each other and exchange  
positions]

*Cameras flash*

MAK SENIK: bangun Anande! <><><><>

Ini yang membuat Bonde marah, malu, dan dendam.

<><><>

Bonde akan membasoh arang di muke, mencuci  
karat di hati. <>

Akan bonde jadikan Gunung Berintan ini padang  
jarak padang cekukor. □□□□••••

*Cameras flash*

Anande jangan kecil hati, jikalau nanti Anande  
terpakse melawan Bonde, itu semate-mate hanya  
untuk membalas dendam saja.

PEMBATAK: o iyalah Bonde, kalau macam tu  
Anande setuju!

MAK SENIK: O iyalah Anande! <><><>

Baéklah pade waktu ketika ini saye hendak

melulohlantakkan negeri Gunong Berintan. <><><>

Mengaléh selalu cik o—i!

[A performer comes to the  
Queen Jerak Jentara. They  
stand back to back with  
each other and exchange  
positions]

HARIMAU: Herrm, herrm.

[the tiger is back, and then,  
hides]



Figure 5.23 The tiger rages in Gunung Berintan and attacks people.



Figure 5.24 Jerak Jentare in a disguise visits Raja Bungsu Sakti in jail.

### 8. Raja Bungsu Sakti's triumph over the tiger and efforts to restore order



Figure 5.25 Pembatak fights the tiger.

Datuk Panglima realises that the people could not defeat the tiger. Therefore, he comes to Raja Johan Syah Nyaya to report the situation. The chief of the marketplace, Datuk Pengulu Pekan, goes with Panglima to the king and suggests to ask Pembatak, who has magical powers, for assistance. Raja Johan Syah Nyaya agrees with the proposal and, as a reward, he makes a promise to marry Pembatak with Putri Rencana Muda. Pembatak is released from prison and then goes to battle against the tiger. Finally, Pembatak defeats the tiger and hands its head to the king. It is 11:09 pm, and this episode lasts for 8.5 minutes.

DATOK PANGLIMA: baéklah pade waktu ketike ini,  
saye sudah pun sampai di istane Raje Jôhan Syah  
Nyaye. «»«»«»

*Chatting*

Oh iyalah Tuanku, saye datang menghadap!

WAK PENGULU PEKAN: Wak Pengulu Pekan  
datang juga Tuanku!

RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: Oh iyalah Datok, oh  
iyalah Wak. «»

Hajat mane berite mane Datok datang menghadap?

DATOK PANGLIMA: Begini tuanku, ade harimau  
yang mengganas di negeri kite ini. «»

Sudah banyak makan kôrban jiwa dan harte.

RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: kalau begitu, Datok  
bawaklah saje ôrang-ôrang di negeri kite ini untuk  
menangkap harimau tu Datok!

DATOK PANGLIMA: semue orang sudahpun  
mencôbe, tapi tak ade yang berhasil Tuanku.

RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: jadi, bagaimana  
carenye dan siape yang dapat menangkap harimau  
tu Datok?

WAK PENGULU PEKAN: Tuanku, bagaimana kalau  
kita keluarkan Bang Batak yang sakti itu untuk  
melawan harimau.

*Cameras flash*

DATOK PANGLIMA: betul Tuanku!

RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA : Baéklah kalau  
begitu.

Dan jike die berhasél, akan saye janjikan untuk  
menikah dengan Tuan Putri Rencane Mude. «»

Tapi sesungguhnya Datok, nikah tu hanyé ôlôk-ôlôkan  
saje !

Hehahaha

Hehahaha

*Ôlôk-ôlôk*: joke; play or  
ruse.

Yet, in two other versions  
of this story from Mantang  
Island and Malaysia, Putri  
Rencana Muda marries

Pembatak. This is one of the changes that Said Parman made to this play.

DATOK PANGLIMA: baéklah kalau begitu Tuanku.  
Silelah Tuanku besenang angin besenang ômbak dahulu.

RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: baéklah Datok !

It is not clear how Pembatak was released from jail. The performers had discussed how to shorten this play and in this episode they skipped some scenes. It is reasonable to speed up the performance because the time is close to midnight and one-third of the audience had left. In the following episodes, the acceleration of the play will become obvious. In the scene that follows this episode, Pembatak suddenly appears on the cleared land.

PEMBATAK: Baéklah pade waktu ketike ini, saye  
sudahpun sampai di tengah padang. <>>  
Baéklah di sini tempat saye hendak bergurau dengan harimau.

[The cast acting as Pembatak comes up and starts acting]

HARIMAU: Hai Bang Batak !  
Sudikah engkau bercanda denganku wahai Bang Batak ?

[The tiger appears]

PEMBATAK: oh iyalah harimau, kalau begitu marilah kite besende gurau.

Pembatak performs the *silat* martial art to fight against the tiger, while the tiger attempts to attack Pembatak. Music dramatises this battle. In the end, Pembatak defeats and beheads the tiger.

Figure 5.26 Pembatak defeats the tiger, kills and beheads it in a battle.



PEMBATAK : Baéklah pade waktu ketike ini, saye  
sudahpun berhasil mengambél kepale harimau ini.  
<>>

[Pembatak shows the tiger's mask that he has removed]

Baéklah pade waktu ketike ini, saye hendak pergi  
menghadap raje. <>>  
Bejalan selalu cik o—i!

Pembatak did not announce his arrival with a formulaic phrase, which could indicate the acceleration of this play.

PEMBATAK: Tuanku, saye datang menghadap!

[Pembatak walks in circles on the stage]

RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: Oh iyalah Bang Batak. <>>  
Bagaimane dengan titah perintah saye?

PEMBATAK: O iyalah Tuanku, titah perintah Tuanku  
sudahpun saye laksanakan. <>>

Dan saye membawa kepale harimau ini sebagai bukti.

RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: Bagos sekali Bang Batak, bagos. <>><>>

As Pembatak arrived, he is already in *Lêdang Balai* in the king's presence. It is possibly a mistake that the

Kalau gitu Bang Batak silelah masok ke dalam istane,  
saye akan memanggil Datok Panglima.

PEMBATAK: oh iyalah Tuanku!

king invited Pembatak to his palace.	RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: o iyalah Datok, silelah menghadap!	
	DATOK PANGLIMA: O iyalah Tuanku, saye datang menghadap!	
	RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: Datok, segere panggulkan Anande saye Tuan Putri Rencane Mude!	
The palace of the king is Lédang Balai. The princess is in Balai Anjung. The arrival of Datuk Panglima suddenly indicates the acceleration of this performance.	DATOK PANGLIMA: Baéklah kalau begitu Tuanku!	
	RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: Baéklah Datok	
	DATOK PANGLIMA: Tuan Putri, tuanku Raje Jôhan Syah Nyaye memanggil Tuan Putri!	[Panglima comes to the princess]
	TUAN PUTRI RENCANA MUDA: O iyelah Datok	
Datuk Panglima is wrong to call the king "Datok"	DATOK PANGLIMA: o iyalah Datok, saye datang menghadap!	[Panglima comes suddenly to the king without any process illustrating a journey]
	RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: Baéklah Datok!	
This also repeats how the departure and the arrival are done without formulaic sentences. The king's and the princess's halls are separated.	TUAN PUTRI RENCANA MUDA: Anande datang Ayahande.	[The princess comes to see her father, the king, which is also without an act illustrating a journey]
	RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: baéklah Anande. «» Sebab Ayahande memanggil Anande kemari, Ayahanda ingin memberi tahu Anande yang mane Bang Batak telah membawa kepale harimau sebagai bukti. «» Dan sebagai imbalannya Anande, Ayahande akan menikahkan Anande dengan Bang Batak. «» Tapi sesungguhnya Anande, nikah tu hanyalah ôlôk-ôlôkan saje.	
	TUAN PUTRI RENCANA MUDA: o iyelah Ayahande, Anande mengikut saje ape yang Ayahande perintahkan	<i>Cameras flash</i>
	RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: baéklah Anande.	
	TUAN PUTRI RENCANA MUDA: o iyelah Ayahande.	
At this point, the performers do not consider the spatial arrangement in the story world anymore. They come and go without illustrating the process in a certain spatial context such as travel. They repeat it again and again, as I have indicated.	RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: Datok, bawakan Bang Batak kemari!	
	DATOK PANGLIMA: baéklah kalau begitu Tuanku. «»«» O iyalah Bang Batak, silelah menghadap!	[From the king's hall, Datuk Panglima suddenly comes before Pembatak]
	PEMBATAK: Baéklah Datok! «»«» O iyalah Tuanku, hajat mane berite mane memanggil hambe datang kemari?	<i>Cameras flash</i> [Pembatak also suddenly appears before Raja Johan Syah Nyaya]
The king uses "Tuanku" to address Pembatak, which is most likely a mistake.	RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: Sebab bête memanggil Tuanku kemari, bête hendak	

He repeats it in the following dialogue though.

It is interesting that Pembatak refuses the king's wish.

The leader of this troupe, Said Parman, changed this story that he got from Mantang Island. He admitted that he changed the marriage of Pembatak and Rencana Muda to the marriage of Raja Johan Syah Nyaya instead. Despite the comical effect that he wanted, the change is irrelevant to Raja Bungsu Sakti's mission to remove disgrace and restore dignity by failing Raja Lela Muda's plan to marry Rencana Muda, which actually drives his wanderings.

menunaikan janjiku padamu. <>>  
Yang mane barangsiapa yang dapat menangkap harimau akan saye hadiahkan untuk menikah dengan Tuan Putri Rencane Mude. <>> o Semôge Bang Batak dapat menerimenye.

*Cameras flash*

PEMBATAK: o iyelah Tuanku, maafkan saye. <>><>>  
Ampun beribu ampun saye sembahkan kepade Tuanku. <>>

Bukannye saye tak suke tapi saye memang terpaksa menôlaknye, karene saye telahpun merase berhutang budi kepade Tuanku yang mane telah membebaskan saye dari penjare besi itu. <>>  
O iyalah Tuanku, sebenanye saye sudahpun menyiapkan seôrang putri yang canték jelite untuk Tuanku jadikan permaisuri!

RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: Kalau begitu dan benar adenye perempuan canték tersebut. <>>  
Baéklah, saye menerimenye.

PEMBATAK: tapi Tuanku, ade satu syarat yang harus Tuanku tepati kepade saye.

*A kid in the audience is singing loudly, making noise.*

RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: apakah itu Tuanku?

PEMBATAK: Yang mane putri yang cantik jelite itu hanye dapat Tuanku lihat dan tatap paras rupenye, setelah selesai akad nikah.

RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: baéklah kalau begitu. <>>

Saye setuju.

PEMBATAK: o iyalah Tuanku!

When the actor playing Raja Johan Syah Nyaya is seated, a female performer (Sabariah) acting as Jerak Jentare (who is the assistant of Said Parman and Elvi Lettriana in training these young performers) calls him and discusses for about 12 seconds. They discuss how to make a change for the next scenes before they resume the performance. This episode continues to prepare for the marriage of Raja Jôhan Syah Nyaya with an unknown bride.

RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: Datok, silelah menghadap!

DATOK PANGLIMA: o iyelah Tuanku, saye datang menghadap.

*Kadi*: a registrar of Muslim marriage and divorce who holds certain judicial powers (Wilkinson 1908:92).

RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: Datok, saye titahkan perintahkan Datok untuk memanggil Tok Kadi Tok!

DATOK PANGLIMA: Ini jam juge Tuanku?

RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: Ini jam juge Tok

There is no process illustrating travel that

DATOK PANGLIMA: baéklah kalau begitu Tuanku. <>><>><>><>>

[Datok Panglima walks a few steps towards the

implies a spatial arrangement. Datok Panglima arrives suddenly in Tok Kadi's place.

Tok Kadi!

TOK KADI: ape hajat berite mane Datok Panglima?

DATOK PANGLIMA: Begini Tok, Tuanku Raje Johan Syah Nyaye memanggil Tok Kadi ke istane!

TOK KADI: Bile jam tu Datok Panglima?

DATOK PANGLIMA: Ini jam juga Tok!

TOK KADI: Ini jam juge?

DATOK PANGLIMA: Iye!

TOK KADI: iyelah!

DATOK PANGLIMA: marilah!

actor acting as Tok Kadi]

### 9. Marriage of Raja Johan Syah Nyaya



Figure 5.27 Raja Johan Syah Nyaya marries an unknown lady wearing the veil, which he uncovers after the procession of the marriage ritual.

Raja Johan Syah Nyaye marries an unknown lady who Pembatak has brought with him. Since a male performer acts like a lady, this play makes use of cross-gender acting. It is also interesting that Said Parman changes some parts of this story, in which Raja Bungsu Sakti should have married Putri Rencana Muda as a reward for his efforts according to the other two versions of this story, which are from Mantang Island and the one that Mubin Sheppard collected. This change aims to create another version with a funny ending adjusted to supposedly current tastes. This last episode takes place for 5 minutes, and the time is 11:18 pm.

DATOK PANGLIMA: O iyelah Tuanku, saye datang menghadap.

RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: baéklah Datuk!

TOK KADI: saye Tok Kadi datang menghadap Tuanku!

RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: O iyelah Tok.

TOK KADI: ape hajat berite mane Tuanku memanggil hambe datang menghadap?

RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: Bête titah perintahkan Tok untuk menikahkan bête dengan perempuan canték Tuk!

TOK KADI: Terime kaséh Datok kalau nak menikahkan saye.

RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: bukan buat Datok, untok bête Tok!

TOK KADI : Oh, untok Tuanku.

Tok Kadi uses the title "Datok" to address the king Raja Jôhan Syah Nyaya, which is clearly a mistake. However, he corrects it in the following lines by using "Tuanku."



	Ampun Tuanku! Saye siap untuk menikahkan Tuanku.	
	RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: Baéklah Tok, ini jam juge Tok.	
	TOK KADI : iye Tuanku! <><><><> Saksi, saksi, saksi?	[Said Parman is preparing two plastic chairs on the stage to be used as a bridal dais]
	SAKSI-SAKSI: Tuanku, Tuanku.	
	TOK KADI : marilah Tuanku!	
	SAKSI-SAKSI: baéklah Tok!	
Despite being part of the dialogue in the play, Tok Kadi's hurry indicates that the performers are in a rush. The performance context also makes it obvious.	TOK KADI : Cepat sikét, cepat sikét. <><><><> Cepat sikét, cepat sikét. <><><><> Siap Tuanku untuk menikah?	
	RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: Siap Tok!	
	TOK KADI : Pengantin perempuan dah siap?	
	PENGANTIN PEREMPUAN: Siap!	
<i>Syahdu</i> : glorious <i>Syahdan</i> : further, then. <i>Wali</i> : the custodian of an unmarried woman. <i>Ketuban</i> : amniotic fluid.	TOK KADI : Bismillahirrahmanirrahim. Syahdu, syahdan, sah wali wali, sah ketuban, sah lah engkau kunikahkan! Sah?	<i>Chatting</i> <i>Cameras flash</i>
Tuk Kadi might have wanted to make a rhyme with the above words.	SAKSI: Sa—h! TOK KADI: sah? SAKSI: Sa—h!	
The performer recites the prayer in the play <i>walawala</i> to mimic the sound of Arabic.	TOK KADI: walawalawalawala. SAKSI: amin TOK KADI: Walawalawalawala, SAKSI: amiin. TOK KADI: Walawalawalawala, SAKSI: amiin.	<i>Laughing</i>    <i>Laughing</i>

Most performers assemble outside the stage. They prepare to parade the groom to pair him with the bride, who is waiting on the stage. While they are parading to the stage and entering the stage from its left-hand side, a female performer acting as Cik Wang sings to accompany this procession.

<i>Tetawak</i> or <i>tawak-tawak</i> : small gong to signal an announcement.	tetawak dipalu langkah dibuke mengikot gendang lah sayang tetawak dipalu langkah dibuke mengikot gendang
<i>Beras kunyit</i> : yellowed rice with the extract of turmeric, which is used for ceremonial events.	tabo(r) mari si beras kunyét untuk menyambot pengantén baru tabo(r) mari si beras kunyét untuk menyambot pengantén baru mari beramai-ramai

kite menabo(r) si beras kunyét lah sayang mari beramai-ramai	<i>Cameras flash</i>
kite menabo(r) si beras kunyét tabo(r) mari si beras kunyét untuk menyambot pengantén baru tabo(r) mari si beras kunyét untuk menyambot pengantén baru	<i>Cameras flash</i>
mari beramai-ramai kite menabo(r) si beras kunyét lah sayang mari beramai-ramai kite menabo(r) si beras kunyét tabo(r) mari si beras kunyét untuk menyambot pengantén baru tabo(r) mari si beras kunyét untuk menyambot pengantén baru	<i>Cameras flash</i>
TOK KADI: sile pengantén mengambil tempat! «»«»«»«»	
Tuanku tenang ajelah !	
RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: baéklah Tok.	
TOK KADI: Sekarang boléhlah Tuanku bukak, kalau nak néngôk, nak ciom sekali pun tak ape-ape!	
RAJA JOHAN SYAH NYAYA: baéklah Tok.	
TOK KADI : satu, dua, tiga!	
PENGANTIN PEREMPUAN: Tok Kadi, die tak endak. Tok Kadi kawin dengan saye ajelah. Tok Kadi, Tok Kadi, a—a Tok Kadi!	[Chorus count: satu, dua, tiga. Raja Johan Syah Nyaya uncovers the scarf covering the face of the bride, and is shocked and faints when he recognises his own wife] <i>Laughing loudly</i>

### 10. Closing dance and giving respect to the audience

All female performers take position to sing and perform the closing dance. The time is 11:23 in which the remaining audience is also leaving when the performers give the closing respect.

*Cik Milék*: the tweaked pronunciation of “Cik Bilék” a title addressing a lady who spends her time mostly in a private room. In this song, she makes artificial flowers arranged from the smallest to the biggest one, *susun jari*.



sayang Cik Milé—k mengaranglah bunga—a bunga dikara—ng bersu—son jari—	
sayang Cik Milé—k mengaranglah bunga—a bunga dikara—ng bersu—son jari—	[Chorus follows the lead]
maafkan enci—k sekalian yang ade—e mak yong kami berenti mohon bere—nti—	
maafkan enci—k sekalian yang ade—e mak yong kami berenti mohon bere—nti—	[Chorus follows the lead]
mengangkat tanga—n menjunjunglah semba—h guru tue mude guru— mu—de—	
mengangkat tanga—n menjunjunglah semba—h guru tue mude guru— mu—de—	[Chorus follows the lead]

The performance ends with the closing dance at 11:27pm. Music accompanies the female performers who are walking in a line to the back of the stage. The master of ceremonies calls for the audience to applaud and announces the end of the mak yong performance of *Raja Bungsu Sakti* by the Mak Yong Muda Ledang Balai Tuan Habib troupe of Yayasan Konservatori Seni Tanjung Pinang. The audience leaves the performance space while a few of them stay a bit longer to talk with the performers. Said Parman asks all the performers to gather and talk briefly about their performance before heading back to their homes in Daik, Lingga.

### Closing remarks

This edition shows how symbols work in an interactive way between the audience and performers. Hence the audience and the performers communicate with each other to construct the whole event and dynamics of the performance. The symbols constitute the stereotypical Malay people and culture, which is an image that the performers intend to elevate to promote Malay culture and identity to the public. In this closing remarks, I want to highlight some aspects of mak yong performance and how it reflects revitalisation of Malay culture and identity.

The performance of the play *Raja Bungsu Sakti* itself is the foremost play in mak yong repertoire and the most difficult one for the young artists to perform. Senior performers like Pak Gani and Said Parman considered that performing this play to the public is quite an achievement and may imply a serious effort of reviving mak yong. Despite condensing and cutting some scenes, the above performance of *Raja Bungsu Sakti* presented a complete story. It employed symbols that epitomise the lives of the Malay people and royal family and reintroduce them to the audience. Comical acting, melodious singing, and the interactive performance may be effective to persuade people to ingrain Malayness into their hearts.

The symbols in mak yong performance are recognisable and clearly from within Malay traditional culture. The performance of *Raja Bungsu Sakti* presented to the audience Malay sayings, idioms, melodies, myths or popular beliefs, and traditional knowledge about the organisation of ship crews, and spatial arrangement of the life sphere. It is the performance that demonstrates how to use sayings properly in a certain context. For instance, when Jerak Jentra found her son, Raja Bungsu Sakti, in prison in Negeri Gunung Berintan, she felt disgraced. She promised to take revenge on Raja Johan Syah Nyaya, by declaring an expression implying profound feelings, *membasuh arang di muka, mencuci karat di hati* (see episode 7). “*Arang di muka*” symbolises an outrageous insult. Hence, to remove it (*membasuh*) means to avenge the insult. This also applies to “*karat di hati*,” which means resentment, revenge, or malice.

In her attempt to fight Raja Johan Syah Nyaya’s men, Jerak Jentara declared an expression, meaning she has to accomplish her mission whatever it takes. She said, “*alang-alang basah biar mandi sekali, alang-alang menceluk pekasam biar sampai ke pangkal lengan*.” In this case, Jerak Jentara had already

started her mission, but she was determined to finish it whatever the risks she would encounter. The use of expressions, idioms, melodies, and other symbols promote selected features of Malay tradition. This *Raja Bungsu Sakti* performance reflects how Said Parman retained these features to accentuate traditional aspects, while accommodating new materials in a shortened version of the play. In addition, another significant change that Said Parman made is the play's end, which is the marriage of Raja Johan Syah Nyaya with an unknown lady—who is performed as a transvestite (see episode 9). For Parman, as he explained to me, this aims to make the last part comical, instead of a serious ending as in the Mantang version of *Raja Bungsu Sakti*. According to him, this funny ending fits the audience's expectations in the current context.

Parman's innovation epitomises the revival of tradition, which brings with it recontextualisation and adjustment to the current social and cultural context. He innovated the composition of *Raja Bungsu Sakti* by including new performable materials, such as a song taken from a popular Indian film (see episode 2). Additionally, Parman tried to present a "traditional" way of staging mak yong by setting up a stage on the ground with some decoration (kerosene lamps) to reconstruct the nuance so it felt more traditional. The Yayasan Konservatori Seni troupe was even flexible in its performance. The performers increased the speed of the performance and omitted some scenes because the time was 11:15 pm and one-third of the audience had already left (see episode 8). Without this flexibility, change, and innovation, mak yong cannot speak in the present, especially to the younger generations.

I would argue that with the change and innovation that Said Parman applied, mak yong can communicate effectively to the public. Mak yong is now instrumental in enhancing several elements or distinctive aspects of Malay traditional culture and bringing them to the public. This is the aim of cultural revitalisation, to make the "dormant" tradition relevant in a present context, which is epitomised by mak yong. It is in this way the people may embrace the traditions as locally configured Malay identity in the Riau Islands.

## Afterword

Never will the Malays disappear from the earth!

In December 2018 people on the island of Mantang organised a cultural event called Festival Mak Yong Mantang. They celebrated mak yong as a cultural heritage. The festival was aimed to promote one of the villages on the island, Mantang Lama (also known as Mantang Kayu Arang), as the foremost place of mak yong tradition in the Riau Islands. The slogan that the people made for their village—“*Mantang kampong mak yong*”—reflects that effort. Thus, Mantang residents created a slogan that says, “never will mak yong disappear from Mantang” (“*Takkan mak yong hilang di Mantang*”). The slogan resembles Hang Tuah’s oath as quoted at the start of this section, which pledges that Malays will never disappear from the earth (“*takkan Melayu hilang di bumi*”). What can we learn from these expressions, particularly in the circumstances related to the revival of mak yong and the formation of Malay identity in the Riau Islands?

The above expressions are used to invigorate cultural production. People in Mantang reinvented Hang Tuah’s oath. They looked for inspiration from it to produce another slogan that expresses their pride in reviving and preserving mak yong tradition. They produced the slogan “never will mak yong disappear from Mantang” to convince themselves of this, to stimulate mak yong production, and also to sustain mak yong tradition. This is not merely playing with words. Performers and people in Mantang deploy the slogan, declare Mantang as the village of mak yong. They also showed the young generation of performers who took the stage at Festival Mak Yong Mantang in 2018 and 2019. The slogans themselves are performative. The performers and the people are doing the “preserving” of mak yong by “declaring” their “oath” and “performing” mak yong on stage.

Taking the example from mak yong in Mantang, I apply this framework to look at a wider scale of cultural configurations propagated by the governments of Tanjung Pinang and Riau Islands. Suryatati Manan, the former mayor of Tanjung Pinang (2003-2013), guided her administration to promote the town as the centre of Malay civilisation (*pusat tamadun Melayu*). This is a newly created title used to brand the town as the land of Malay culture. Hence, the administration organised cultural festivals to celebrate the title. One of the festivals was Revitalisasi Budaya Melayu (Revitalising Malay Culture) held in 2004, 2008, and 2012.<sup>1</sup> This event was noticeable due to its scale. It showcased an international festival incorporating academic events (seminars on Malay cultural heritage), exhibitions, and cultural performances. In the Riau Islands itself, Suryatati’s administration supported local cultural activists and performers to stimulate cultural production, including the performing arts, literature, and other genres. In my fieldwork between 2017 and

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<sup>1</sup> See the documentation of the events of 2004 and 2008 in Abdul Malik (2010)

2018, some performers in Tanjung Pinang recalled that Suryatati was supportive of local artists during her time in office.

In Lingga District, cultural activists and the government made a slogan for Lingga to brand it as the centre of the Malay cultural realm. The Lingga administration formalised the slogan for the district in 2010: “*Bunda Tanah Melayu*” (“The Motherland of Malays”). This slogan originated from the event of a gathering of Malay authors from Southeast Asian countries in 1997. A federation of Malay author associations in Malaysia named GAPENA, which initiated the event, published a collection of travelogues and poems written by the participants of the event titled *Daik Bonda Tanah Melayu* (“Daik, the Motherland of Malays”). It is this book title that Lingga District adapted, formalised, and expanded in scale to become Lingga as the motherland of the Malays. Subsequently, the provincial government adopted the Lingga’s slogan for the Riau Islands. Now the official epithet of the Riau Islands is *Bunda Tanah Melayu*.

From creating a slogan, Lingga District has attempted to make itself the true motherland of the Malays. It celebrated the epithet through cultural festivals and the making of a hero. Since 2012, Lingga had sponsored the nomination of the sultan of Riau-Lingga-Johor-Pahang, Mahmud Ri’ayat Syah, to be officiated as a national hero of Indonesia. This effort succeeded in 2017. With this nomination, the local government, cultural activists, and performers selected and promoted the life story of the sultan as enshrined by his legacy: courage and resistance against the Dutch through warfare on the waters around the islands.<sup>2</sup> With the recognition of the sultan, the above agents used the story of Sultan Mahmud to serve as a basis to elevate the position of Lingga as the heir of the former base of the Malay kingdom. It was Sultan Mahmud who moved from Riau (at its seat on Bintan Island) to make a new power centre in Lingga. The Lingga administration supported cultural production in order to popularise Sultan Mahmud’s story. One of the ways they did this was through bangsawan theatre. Meanwhile, to achieve its mission to become the motherland of Malays, the Riau Islands Province sponsored cultural festivals and promoted artistic icons as the representation and distinctive markers of Malay identity of the Riau Islands.

The above examples showed how the slogan helped ground and localise Malayness by giving a particular place to it. Making the slogan “*Mantang kampung mak yong*” is localising mak yong in Mantang Island, grounding it to a specific place. This, at the same time, is giving a central place to the island as the “foremost” place of mak yong in the Riau Islands, making a reputation for it, a place identity. This logic applies to the Riau Islands as the “motherland of Malays,” which makes a place identity and gives a central place to Malay culture and subject, the Malays. This is how words play roles in mak yong’s revival and identity formation, or generally in Malay cultural revitalisation.

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<sup>2</sup> This is also emphasised to make the story consistent with the Indonesian nationalist narrative.

The concepts of heirloom (*pusaka*) and inheritance (*warisan*) reflect an awareness of owning heritage. The practitioners of mak yong use these concepts to recognise it as their heritage—a revived tradition—and to realise the importance of the effort to save it from extinction. It is these words—the concepts—that value mak yong as a “treasure” (*khazanah*) from the past and make it authoritative “text” or an old tradition. What underlies such a status? Stories serve as a basis for mak yong’s origin and beliefs about its magical aspect. An origin myth created obscurity of mak yong’s provenance, set it “away” from a remote past, and made a mythical animal’s dance as its cause. People’s stories about the negative impacts of violating the rules of mak yong tradition and supernatural interference became reasons for its convention to be followed. All these stories revolve around the act of turning mak yong into heritage through heritagisation.

The roles of words happen to become obvious in the act of linking mak yong to the Riau Islands’ past through a narrative of continuity. Unlike the myth of origin, this narrative has been made to connect the region with the historical Malay kingdoms of Bentan, Riau-Johor, and Riau-Lingga. The local authorities, activists, and performers sponsored the making of such a narrative of continuity that includes mak yong and set it as part of local history anchored in the former kingdoms. It is this narrative that legitimises and authenticates mak yong as tradition, which is the act of traditionalisation. The slogan “erecting the submerged tree trunk” reflects the act of constructing the narrative that positions the Riau Islands as the heir of the former kingdoms. The narrative is made of writings, museum exhibitions, public discourses, and stage performances.

Articulation of words in speeches, poetics, and performances contribute to the effort of making sense of place, of reconstructing a Malay cultural realm, and of making other people become Malay, which can be conceptualised as Malayisation. Mak yong is part of these practices that celebrate sites as cultural representations. The local agents mentioned above constructed mak yong into a Malay artistic icon. Because of this, its performances invite comments and speeches that encourage the audience to embrace the epitome of Malay culture and identity. This happened periodically at cultural festivals, where mak yong is performed on stage.

The stage performance of mak yong brings the story world into life and employs symbols to convey messages to audiences. The performance makes abstract things tangible. It gives a concrete example of the local Malay language, the royal family members, people, and what is simply epitomised as “typical” Malay people and culture. It is the stage performance that shows the audiences the embodiment of Malayness, which they may take into daily life. Therefore, mak yong performance contributes to regularisation of Malay identity. However, what is the role of words in the performance? Words play a major role in mak yong performance. It is words that become formulaic phrases driving the scenes. The performers employ such phrases to start dialogues, change the settings, indicate a

move from one to another place, illustrate situation and places, and substitute an action. Words constitute the main symbols in the stage performance.

As a final remark, I want to conclude that it is the words that play a key role in mak yong revival and identity formation. Words are instrumental in cultural revitalisation, and particularly in the acts of heritagisation, traditionalisation, Malayisation, and regularisation. It is words that serve as an instrument in (re)making the Malay subject, making sense of place, and reconstructing a localised Malay cultural realm, “a country of words.”



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## Appendices

### List of informants (selected)

No	Name of informants	Locations	Date of interview
1	Abdul Gani	Mantang Island	25.03.2017 23.08.2017 24.08.2017 04.10.2017 15.10.2017 28.10.2017 18.11.2017 09.12.2017 17.12.2017 19.09.2018 22.09.2018
2	Abdul Wahab	Sungai Enam	05.09.2017 07.09.2017 25.09.2017 09.12.2017 12.12.2017
3	Al Azhar	Penyengat Island Virtual (Zoom)	06.09.2018 10.09.2020
4	Al Mukhlis	Penyengat Island	06.09.2018
5	Atan	Sungai Enam	04.11.2017 04.12.2017
6	Aswandi Syahri	Tanjung Pinang	24.03.2017 15.09.2018
7	Dormat	Mantang Island	08.09.2017 23.08.2017 24.08.2017 04.10.2017
8	Elvi Lettriana	Tanjung Pinang	25.09.2018
9	Hidayat Palansuka	Tanjung Sebauk	20.08.2017 25.08.2017
10	Kamarul Zaman	Daik	06.10.2017
11	Kepala RT-3 Bukit Batu	Bukit Batu, Bintan	30.10.2017

12	Lazuardi	Daik	13.09.2017
13	Muhammad Ali	Sungai Enam Mantang Island	09.12.2017 17.12.2017
14	Muhammad Hasbi	Daik Tanjung Pinang	13.09.2017 26.10.2017
15	Muhammad Satar	Kijang      Mantang	21.08.2017 18.10.2017 19.10.2017 02.11.2017 04.11.2017 09.12.2017 21.10.2017
16	Ramli	Sungai Enam	04.12.2017
17	Rida K Liamsi	Tanjung Pinang	22.08.2017
18	Rio (Samudra Ensemble)	Kijang	13.09.2018
19	Rizal Muis	Tanjung Pinang	14.10.2017 28.10.2017 16.12.2017
20	Said Parman	Daik Tanjung Pinang	15.11.2017 07.09.2018 10.09.2018 25.09.2018
21	Samson Rambah Pasir	Batam	19.09.2018
22	Sudirman El Batamy	Batam	14.09.2018
23	Sudiono	Mantang Island	21.10.2017
24	Sumadi	Teluk Bakau, Bintan	10.10.2017
25	Syafaruddin	Tanjung Pinang	24.03.2017
26	Syahrial	Tanjung Pinang	17.10.2017
27	Tarmizi	Batam	15.08.2017 14.09.2018
28	Tengku Ryo Riezqan	Virtual	27.09.2020
29	Tengku Mira Sinar	Medan	27.02.2020
30	Timat	Penao, Bintan	12.10.2017



### List of recordings of cultural festivals and other events

No	Name of events	Locations	Dates
1	Theatre performance of <i>Celoteh Budak Sebauk</i> from Kampong Sebauk at Pesta Rakyat of Subdistrict of Tanjung Pinang Kota in conjunction with Indonesian independence day.	Kecamatan Tanjung Pinang Kota	24 August 2017
2	<p>Festival Teater Bintan, organised by the Department of Culture of Bintan District.</p> <p>a. Theatre performance of <i>Sultan Mahmud mangkat di julang</i> by Sanggar Tuah Pusaka from Sungai Enam.</p> <p>b. Mak yong performance of <i>Putri Timun Muda</i>, by Sanggar Bungsu Sakti from Mantang Island.</p> <p>c. Theatre performance of <i>Celoteh Kampung Nelayan</i> Sanggar Seni Budaya Kemilau from Sri Kuala Lobam.</p> <p>d. The dance performance by Sanggar Joget Dangkong Melayu Serumpun Bersatu from Teluk Bakau.</p> <p>e. Dance performance of the tale of naughty boy <i>Jangoi</i>, by Sanggar Kreasi Guru from Sungai Enam.</p> <p>f. Mak yong performance of <i>Raja Johan Syah Nyaya</i> by Sanggar Mak Yong Warisan from Kijang.</p> <p>g. Dance performance of Tari Inai by Sanggar Bungsu Sakti from Mantang Island.</p> <p>h. Theatre performance of <i>Nujum Pak Belalang</i> by Sanggar Teater Kelana from Kijang.</p>	Kijang	26-27 August 2017
3	Bangsawan theatre performance of <i>Dendam Putre Mahkote</i> by Sanggar Sri Mahkota Lingga, sponsored by Lingga District Government.	Daik	06 October 2017
4	Bangsawan theatre performance of <i>Asmara Putre Mahkote</i> by Sanggar Sri Mahkota Lingga, sponsored by Lingga District Government.	Daik	07 October 2017

5	<p>Art festival, Pentas Seni, organised by the Department of Tourism and Culture of Tanjung Pinang, as part of Festival Bahari Kepri 2017, coordinated by the Provincial Government of Riau Islands.</p> <p>a. Music performances by Staman Akustik from Penyengat.</p> <p>b. Dance performances of <i>Sang Pejuang</i>, <i>Semarak Berzapin</i>, and <i>Rampak Berentak</i> by Sanggar Megat from Tanjung Pinang.</p> <p>c. Dance performance of <i>Biring Manggis</i> by Rumpun Batak Bersatu Paguyuban Sumatera Utara, North Sumatrans diaspora communities in the Riau Islands.</p> <p>d. Dance performance of Joget Dangkong by the group of Dangkong Mak Dare from Dompok Island, Tanjung Pinang.</p> <p>e. Music performances of Al Wahid Akustik from Tanjung Pinang.</p> <p>f. Dance performance of Tari Indang and Tari Bagurau by Sanggar Pusako Minang of Paguyuban Sumatera Barat.</p> <p>g. Mak yong performance of <i>Wak Perambun</i> by the group of Mak Yong Muda Ledang Balai Tuan Habib of Yayasan Konservatori Seni from Tanjung Pinang.</p>	Tanjung Pinang	14-15 October 2017
6	<p>Contest of Malay aphoristic poem recitation, Festival Gurindam Duabelas, organised by the Department of Tourism and Culture of Tanjung Pinang, as part of Festival Bahari Kepri 2017, coordinated by the Provincial Government of Riau Islands.</p>	Tanjung Pinang	17 October 2017
7	<p>Poetry readings, Panggung Penyair, organised by the Department of Tourism and Culture of Tanjung Pinang, as part of Festival Bahari Kepri 2017, coordinated</p>	Tanjung Pinang	18 October 2017

	by the Provincial Government of Riau Islands.		
8	Documentation of mak yong performance (prelude part, without story) by Sanggar Mak Yong Warisan from Kijang, recorded by METRO TV.	Kijang	19 October 2017
9	Boat parade, Parade Kapal Hias, organised by the Department of Tourism and Culture of Tanjung Pinang, as part of Festival Bahari Kepri 2017, coordinated by the Provincial Government of Riau Islands.	Tanjung Pinang	20 October 2017
10	Malay art and cultural festival, Festival Sungai Enam, organised by the Department of Culture of Bintan District. a. Boat parade, Parade Kapal Hias. b. Malay cooking exhibition. c. Malay game festival of spinning top, Gasing. d. Dance performance of Joget Dangkong by the group of Sanggar Joget Dangkong Melayu Serumpun Bersatu from Teluk Bakau. e. Mak yong performance of <i>Raja Johan Syah Nyaya</i> by Sanggar Mak Yong Warisan From Kijang.	Sungai Enam	02 November 2017
11	Malay art and cultural festival, Perhelatan Memuliakan Tamadun Melayu Antar Bangsa, organised by several departments of Lingga District. a. Malay cooking and handicrafts exhibition. b. Celebrating Sultan Mahmud Riayat Syah as Indonesian national hero (speeches by local cultural figures, the local committee for the nomination of Sultan Mahmud, interspersed by music and dance performances. c. Seminar, Perbincangan Perhelatan Memuliakan Tamadun Melayu Antarbangsa. d. Music and dance performances.	Daik	17-26 November 2017

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>e. Poetry readings, Malam Seribu Kata di Negeri Yang Dipertuan Besar Bertamadun Bunda Tanah Melayu.</li> <li>f. Malay culture on parade by school children, Pawai Budaya Anak-Anak.</li> <li>g. Malay culture on parade participated by the representatives of villages and governmental institutions in Lingga, Pawai Budaya.</li> <li>h. Mak yong performance of <i>Raja Bungsu Sakti</i> by Mak Yong Muda Ledang Balai Tuan Habib of Yayasan Konservatori Seni Tanjung Pinang.</li> <li>i. Bangsawan theatre performance of <i>Kedaulatan Sultan Mahmud Ri'ayat Syah Yang Tiada Terbantah</i>, by Sanggar Sri Mahkota Lingga from Daik.</li> <li>j. Bangsawan theatre performance of <i>Ajab Sumpah Putri</i> by Sanggar Diram Perkasa from Sungai Buluh, Singkep Island.</li> </ul>		
12	<p>Students art festival, Pentas Seni Gerakan Seniman Masuk Sekolah Bintang Timur Subdistrict, organised by the Committee of GSMS Kepri, funded by the Directorate of Arts of Ministry of Education and Culture.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The performance of the vocal group of SMK Negeri 1 Bintan (accompanied by dance).</li> <li>b. Poetry readings <i>Tuah</i> and <i>Pahlawanku</i> accompanied by music, by the group from SD Negeri 005 Bintan Timur.</li> <li>c. Performance of mak yong dances (new creation or <i>kreasi baru</i>) accompanied by music and song of “Mak Yong Progressive” of Samudra Ensemble, by the group from SD 002 Bintan Pesisir.</li> <li>d. Music performance of “Lancang Kuning” by the group from SMP Negeri 3 Bintan.</li> </ul>	Kijang	14 December 2017

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>e. Mak yong performance of <i>Raja Megat Muda di Negeri Lenggang Cahaya</i>, by the group from SMP Negeri 23 Satu Atap, Mantang Baru Village, Mantang Island.</li> <li>f. Dance performance of new creation of dance work (based on mak yong and Zapin dances) by the group from SD Negeri 001 Mantang Lama, Mantang Island.</li> <li>g. Music performance of “Gambus Jodoh” by the group from SMP Negeri 1 Bintan.</li> <li>h. Mak yong performance of <i>Raja Lak Kenarong</i> by the group from SMA Negeri 1 Mantang, Mantang Island.</li> </ul>		
13	Documentation of mak yong performance of <i>Raja Bungsu Sakti</i> by Sanggar Bungsu Sakti from Mantang Island, organised by BPNB Kepulauan Riau in Mantang Island.	Mantang	22 September 2018
14	Festival Mak Yong 2019, organised by BPNB Kepulauan Riau. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Mak yong performance of <i>Putri Siput Gondang</i> by Sangar Warisan Budaya Pantai Basri Batam.</li> <li>b. Mak yong performance of <i>Raja Bungsu Sakti</i> by Sanggar Mak Yong Warisan, Kijang.</li> <li>c. Mak yong performance (no title) by Kumpulan Sri Gabus, Kelantan, Malaysia.</li> <li>d. Mak yong performance of <i>Raja Lak Kenarong</i> by Sanggar Bungsu Sakti, Mantang Island.</li> <li>e. The performance of Main Puteri by Kumpulan Sri Gabus, Kelantan.</li> <li>f. The performance of Tari Inai by Kumpulan Sri Gabus, Kelantan.</li> <li>g. The performance of Wayang Kelantan, by Kumpulan Sri Gabus, Kelantan.</li> </ul>	Tanjung Pinang	8–11 April 2019

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### Curriculum Vitae

Alan Darmawan studied geography (2006–2011) and anthropology (2012–2014) in Universitas Negeri Medan in North Sumatra, Indonesia. In Medan, he was actively involved in anti-corruption campaigns and investigation, and advocacy on human rights in one of the NGOs in the city (2008–2014). Between 2014 and 2015, Alan taught geography, ethnographic methods, and urban anthropology at the Department of Anthropology, Universitas Negeri Medan. He came to Hamburg for his doctorate in 2016. At Hamburg University, Alan conducted research on the revival of traditions, identity formation, and cultural revitalisation in the Malay World for his PhD project and EU-funded project called *Competing Regional Integration in Southeast Asia* (CRISEA). Besides, he also co-taught Critical Heritage Studies at the Department of Southeast Asian Languages and Cultures. In addition to his academic activity, Alan presented papers at international workshops and conferences. His research interests are including political ecology, land tenure dispute, cultural revitalisation, cultural heritage, and identity formation. Alan can be contacted at this e-mail address: [darmawn29@gmail.com](mailto:darmawn29@gmail.com).

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Hamburg, 25 März 2021

Ort, Datum

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### **Abstract**

This study focuses on the revival of traditional culture and the formation of a distinctive Malay identity in the Indonesian province of Riau Islands. Local authorities, cultural activists, and performers have promoted local historical narratives, tales, and performing arts to celebrate Malay identity by reconstructing a world shaped by stories, a localised Malay cultural realm that is best described as “a country of words.” I view the revitalisation of Malay heritage and the creation of iconic cultural representation through the revival of the theatre form mak yong by considering how it contributes to shaping Malay identity in the Riau Islands.

Focusing on performance and discourse practices, I find that mak yong’s revival is part of cultural revitalisation that materialises through the acts of heritagisation, traditionalisation, Malayisation, and regularisation of symbols and values. I argue that mak yong is being turned into heritage through the actions of its practitioners; it is linked to select narratives connecting Riau Islands with the past and supported by district and provincial governments; it is applied as a Malay identity marker both locally and transnationally; and its performances reflect distinctive values and ideals that are tied to place and identity. Mak yong’s revival in daily practices and stage performances contribute to shaping identity, reconstructing the cultural realm, and (re)making the Malay subject.

### **Abstrakt**

Die vorliegende Dissertation beschäftigt sich mit der Wiederbelebung der traditionellen Kultur und der Bildung einer unverwechselbaren malaiischen Identität in der indonesischen Provinz Riau-Inseln. Lokale Behörden, Kulturaktivisten und Künstler haben lokale historische Erzählungen, Geschichten und darstellende Künste gefördert, um die malaiische Identität zu beleben, indem sie eine von Geschichten geprägte Welt rekonstruierten, eine lokalisierte malaiische Kultur, die am besten als „Land der Worte“ bezeichnet werden kann. Die Wiederbelebung des malaiischen Erbes und die Schaffung einer ikonischen kulturellen Repräsentation durch die Wiederbelebung der Theaterform Mak Yong wird im Hinblick darauf untersucht, wie Mak Yong zur Gestaltung einer malaiischen Identität auf den Riau-Inseln beiträgt.

Der Blick auf Aufführungs- und Diskurspraktiken zeigt, dass die Wiederbelebung von Mak Yong Teil einer kulturellen Wiederbelebung ist, die sich in Heritagisierung, Traditionalisierung, Malayisierung und Regularisierung manifestiert. Hier wird die These vertreten, dass Mak Yong durch die Handlungen seiner Praktizierenden zum Erbe gemacht wird; es wird an Narrative gekoppelt, die die Riau-Inseln mit ihrer Vergangenheit in Beziehung setzen, und von Bezirks- und Provinzregierungen unterstützt; es wird sowohl lokal als auch transnational als malaiischer Identitätsmarker verwendet; und seine Aufführungen spiegeln unverwechselbare Werte und Ideale wider, die an Ort und Identität gebunden sind. Mak Yongs Wiederbelebung durch Alltagspraktiken und Bühnenaufführungen trägt dazu bei, Identität zu prägen, eine Kultur zu rekonstruieren und das malaiische Subjekt (neu) zu konstituieren.