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In the course of preparing a manuscript for a book presenting the well-known Malay poem entitled *Syair Bidasari*, I was surprised to come upon evidence that the work was enjoyed over a far wider region than was previously known to scholars of Malay studies. In the library of the Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde there resides a volume authored by Ester Vallado Daroy entitled *Bidasari*. This volume, coming to 91 pages, was published in Quezon City, the Philippines, in 1980. The contents are best described by quoting the author's preface:

This story *Bidasari* is a rendition of a Maranao legend which I stumbled upon while working on a research grant in the University of the Philippines in 1968. While I kept the basic storyline as translated in English from the original Maranao dialect in verse, I have taken many liberties with the scenes, incidents and descriptions. I therefore beg the indulgence of the native Maranao or of the scholar on Muslim literature; whatever beauty it may exude, I ascribe to the Maranaos, and whatever outrages the scholar may uncover, I am fully to blame.

No other information concerning the provenance of the story is given. The *Syair Bidasari* is one of the best known and widespread of the romantic *syair*, and it is likely that only the *Syair Ken Tambuhan* rivals it. We know from recollections of the poet Amir Hamza's youth that the poem was one of the works read in the homes of the aristocracy of Langkat (Bagian Kesenian 1955:10). Ch.E.P. Kerckhoff described this work as one of those adapted to theatrical performance in Padang in the 1880s (Robson 1969:140), and according to W.W. Skeat the story was used for theatrical representation in the Mendu theatre (Skeat 1900:520). In 1965 a feature film of the story was made in Malaysia by the Shaw Brothers Film Agency. Some thirteen manuscripts of the work are kept in institutions the world over, and one manuscript is in private hands in Sri Lanka. A prose translation in the Makassarese language and Bugis script is also held in the Leiden University library. Four editions of the Malay poem have appeared in published form (Van Hoëvell 1843; Klinkert 1878; Elwert 1883; H. van den Berg 1995).
The earliest of these contains the Malay text in Jawi script, notes, and a Dutch translation, the second presents the text in Jawi script, and the two most recent editions are transliterations of the Malay text. E.P. Wieringa (1998:175-7) gives a summary of the poem's narrative and bibliographical details.

A comparison of Daroy's translation with the Malay manuscripts is an exercise of limited value, since important characteristics of the source text no doubt are not discernible in the translation. Nevertheless, the narrative in this translation is an almost exact replica of the basic Malay narrative shared by all the editions of the poem. Narrative variations are minor, and many examples of figurative language and descriptive passages of the Malay editions are found intact in the translation of the Maranao text. Certain proper nouns are found in slightly different forms. For example, the Garuda of the Malay text is the Kurita in the Maranao version, and the name of Bidasari's pleasure garden in the Malay editions, Taman Penglipur Lara, is Pentipoulara in Daroy's edition.

Speakers of Maranao reside in the area around Lake Lanao on the island of Mindanao. The Maranao language is one of the smallest of the major languages of the Philippine archipelago. According to one estimate, made in the mid-1980s, approximately one million Filipinos, or 1.8% of the then population, spoke Maranao (Moseley and Asher 1994: maps 41 and 43, page 120). It is an Austronesian language of the Danao subgroup, and apart from those on Mindanao Island, speakers of Danao languages reside in the Malaysian province of Sabah.

That the peoples of Mindanao share the cultural heritage of the Malay peoples is well known. N.M. Saleeby (1912) has discussed the earliest 'Malay migrations' to the region now known as the Philippines, with great emphasis on cultural aspects, and C.A. Majul (1988:50-1) has emphasized that the arrival of Islam in what is now the Philippines must be considered in the context of the spread of Islam throughout the Malay world in general. Maguindanao¹ manuscripts containing genealogies of the two main sultanates of the region, Sulu and Maguindanao, illustrate this clearly. Those familiar with Malay genealogies will be already familiar with some elements of the genealogies, such as the story of the discovery of a princess inside a bamboo shoot (Saleeby 1905:31, 37; Ras 1968) and the genealogical linkages to Iskandar Zulkarnain (Saleeby 1905:53). In discussing one such tarsila (genealogy), Saleeby (1905:20) writes: 'The Moros² derived what learning they have from

¹ The Maguindanao people are also located on the island of Mindanao, and live in Cotabato Province, to the south of the Maranao people.
² The term 'Moro' was used to designate the Muslim members of the Maranao, Maguindanao and other groups of the region.
Malay and Arabic sources, and consequently take pride in what Malay and Arabic they know and can write; hence their custom of beginning their books with an Arabic and Malay introduction. For example, the introduction to the Mindanao laws (Luwaran), written in Arabic script, reads:

In the name of Allah the compassionate, the merciful, all praise is Allah's, who guides us in faith and Islam, and blessings of Allah upon our master Muhammad and all his family and companions, and having said this, all these laws are taken from the books (entitled) Minhaj, Fathul Qarib, Taqribul Intifa' and Miratu Tullab, translated from the Jawi language into (?) Mindanao, the abode of peace [...].

The text following this passage contains the laws written in Arabic script in the Maguindanao language.

Turning to specifically Maranao literature, the correspondence with Malay traditions is no less evident. Manuscripts (kirim) of the oral epic entitled Darangen were written in Arabic script (Ma. Delia Coronel et al. 1986:5-6). Juan Francisco (1994) has discussed the origin of the Maranao Ramayana. And in the compilation of Maranao stories assembled by H.P. McKaughan (1995:v), who describes a rich oral tradition, can be found characters who feature prominently in the Malay corpus, such as Raja Inderaputera and Nenek Kebayan.

The exclusion of texts and data from the Philippines from Malay studies appears to be an unfortunate consequence of the tendency of scholarship to develop within parameters corresponding to the boundaries of what used to be colonial empires and are now nation states. Our knowledge of the centres in which Malay works were created and written, as well as the means by which these works spread throughout the Malay world, is extremely limited. Knowledge of the cultural traditions shared by the peoples of the Malay world and the Philippines could be useful in this regard. To this end, I am currently seeking further information about the sources used by Ester Vallado Daroy.

REFERENCES
Daroy, E.V., 1980, Bidasari, Manila: Rex Book Store.


