WILLEM VAN DER MOLEN

The Syair of Minye Tujuh

For the reading of the inscription this particular style causes problems, most of which have, however, by now been solved.

De Casparis 1975:59

Introduction

The allegedly satisfactory state of affairs suggested by the above quotation relates to one of the most intriguing inscriptions of the Indonesian archipelago, the Malay poem on one of the two tombstones (nisan) of a princess in Minye Tujuh, Aceh.¹ This inscription, dated 781 AH (1380 AD), is written not in the usual Arabic script but in so-called Old Sumatran characters. The particular style which caught the attention of the Dutch epigrapher J.G. de Casparis and which made the inscription so difficult to read refers to the influence of the Arabic script on these old characters. Looking for an explanation of this influence, De Casparis (1975:58-9) suggests that it may have been a matter of training: the Arabic script must have been the most familiar type of script for the clerk charged with the reproduction of the text in stone in old characters.

The Minye Tujuh inscription was successfully deciphered by W.F. Stutterheim in 1936, with the gratefully acknowledged help of H. Djajadiningrat. The latter also put his unpublished transliteration and translation of a related inscription at Stutterheim's disposal. This was the inscription on what is probably the other tombstone of the royal grave. This inscription, however, is not in Malay and in Old Sumatran characters but in the Arabic language and script; its text differs from the Malay one. One problem is that the Arabic inscription, although referring to the same event, displays a different date: not 781 AH but 791 AH (1389 AD). As other details of the date are the same, it is generally assumed that a mistake was made in the second digit of the year in one of the two inscriptions (Stutterheim 1936:271, Ricklefs [2001]:4).

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WILLEM VAN DER MOLEN is lecturer Old Javanese at the University of Leiden, where he also obtained his PhD. He has published together with Kartika Setyawati and I. Kuntara Wiryamartana *Katalog naskah Merapi-Merbabu Perpustakaan Nasional Republik Indonesia*, Yogyakarta: Sanata Dharma, Leiden: Opleiding Talen en Culturen van Zuidoost-Azië en Oceanië, Universiteit Leiden, 2002. He is the author of 'A token of my longing: A rhetorical analysis of Sita's letter to Rama, Old Javanese Ramayana 11:22-32', *Indonesia and the Malay World* 31, 2003, pp. 339-55. Dr Van der Molen may be contacted at: w.van.der.molen@let.leidenuniv.nl.

Stutterheim draws several interesting inferences from the inscription. One of these is the name of the deceased person, Raja Iman Varda Rahmatallah ('Queen of the Faith Varda Rahmatallah'). According to the Arabic text she was the daughter of Sultan Malik az-Zāhir (that is the Sultan of Samudra; it is not clear which one, as several sultans bear this title). The name of the dynasty possibly refers to India: Bharubha or Bharubhasa, tentatively identified by Stutterheim as Bharukaccha in Gujarāt (which may be the area meant by local traditions referring to 'a stranger from the West' as the founder of the dynasty). Finally, this dynasty had a claim to Pasai and Kedah, a somewhat unexpected combination of places on either side of the Malacca Straits which may represent a late echo of the famous empire of Sriwijaya (Stutterheim 1936:276-7).

A spectacular discovery was that the inscription contained a literary text: a poem in the form of a *syair* – in fact the oldest Malay *syair* we know. Stutterheim bases his conclusion on the division of the text into stanzas of four rhyming lines. He did not find the pattern of four words to the line that is characteristic of the *syair*, but this, he adds, might be due to the as yet uncertain reading of some of the lines (Stutterheim 1936:278).

After the Second World War G.E. Marrison, in a short but influential article of 1951, offered a new hypothesis for the Malay text. While relying on Stutterheim for the Malay text, he found that it was not the rules of the Malay *syair* that had been applied but those of Sanskrit prosody: a regular pattern of long and short syllables, of the *Upajāti* metre. Admittedly the metre had not been applied flawlessly: Marrison points out several lines which deviate from the prescribed pattern. These deviations helped him to isolate possible mistransliterations in some lines and correct them according to the prescribed pattern, while in other lines, where it was not yet possible to arrive at a definitive reading, at least it could be predicted what that reading might look like (apparently Marrison was not able to read the letters of the original himself).

Marrison's view has been generally accepted. This is reflected in literary histories (see Winstedt 1939, 1977; Hooykaas 1951, 1952, 1953). The poem has played no role in the discussion on the origin of the Malay *syair*; the first *syair* has been ascribed instead to Hamzah Fansuri, around 1600.²

What amazes me as an outsider to the field of Malay literature is the ease with which such an important text as the *Minye Tujuh* inscription has been discarded. After all, we are talking about the very beginnings of Malay literature. A serious effort to shed light on this text by two leading experts has been dropped without much ado in exchange for the hypothesis of an admittedly concerned and recognized scholar but one without access to the basic material (which he also did not claim), while a critical re-examination of that basic

² Teeuw 1966; Voorhoeve 1968; Al-Attas 1968; Braginsky 2004:618. Voorhoeve and Al-Attas do not even mention *Minye Tujuh*.

material was discouraged by De Casparis's authoritative statement that most of the problems had been solved.

Nevertheless, the reading of the inscription is still beset with many uncertainties. This is frankly admitted by the learned editor Stutterheim himself. As an example take the left-over(!) syllable *ma* at the end of line B 1. Marrison's finetuning unfortunately was not based on a re-reading of the inscription. His appeal to prosody has a long tradition in philology, but philologists, unlike Marrison, apply it in combination with recourse to the original text.

Nor do I think, as De Casparis did, that the problems of reading have much to do with Arabic influence. Actually, as far as the shape of the letters is concerned there is no Arabic influence. The sculptor has played with the shape of exactly one letter, no more. This is the extremely long *cakra* in the name of the day in A 2, *Śukra*. (Perhaps it is no coincidence that this sign happens to be written from right to left.) Even so, the original character remains fully recognizable. One other 'Arabic' aspect does not concern the shape of individual letters but the lay-out of the inscription as a whole: the right instead of left alignment in lines that are not completely filled, as is the case in scripts that are written from right to left (this happens three times, namely in A 2, A 3, and B 2). The alignment does of course not influence the legibility of the individual characters. The idea of Arabic influence goes back to Stutterheim who, having in mind that wretched category of people 'who know the Arabic characters by sight only', thought that for them 'the whole inscription might appear to be written in a somewhat strange kind of Arabic', adding: 'Still Arabists know better' (Stutterheim 1936:270). Stutterheim should have known better.

The inscription of 1380 is still in a remarkably good state, or at least it was in 1915 when the photographs were taken on which all further research including the present one is based. In this respect the stone causes few problems for reading, the difficulties being caused mainly by the anomalous shape of some of the characters, heterogeneous as well if the same character occurs more than once, and distorted in a few instances because of adjustment to the available space. All these handicaps are pointed out by Stutterheim (1936:275). Whether they have to do with carelessness or a lack of experience with this type of script on the part of the sculptor I cannot tell.

This article is the result of a fresh look at the inscription. Naturally, my conclusions depend on my reading of the characters of the inscription. I shall complement my solutions with arguments for and against in order to enable readers to judge for themselves and also to provoke further discussion. Given the difficulties presented by the inscription, I consider Stutterheim's pioneering transliteration a great achievement. It has served as my starting point in making my own transliteration. I shall compare Stutterheim's reading and mine in a line-by-line discussion. Following his practice I have numbered these lines A 1-4 and B 1-4. Lines of the poem occupying more than one line of writing are

given letters: 1a, 1b, 1c, and so on. Marrison's text is added because, although basically the same as Stutterheim's, it is not identical with it and has had a tremendous influence. Table 1 gives a synoptic overview of our three versions and English translations of the Malay text.

My work is based on the two photographs of the inscription made in 1915 by the Oudheidkundige Dienst in Nederlandsch-Indië and known as A 1345 and A 1346. These were reproduced for the first time by Bosch in a report of 1915 (between pages 129 and 130). Stutterheim's article of 1936 is accompanied by the same set of photographs (Plates V and VI, between pages 278 and 279). Finally, Hooykaas published them three more times (in 1951, 1952 and 1953). As these publications are difficult to access, I reproduce both photographs in this article; see Figs. 1 and 2.

The two photographs show the front and rear sides of the tombstone, each side containing one of the two stanzas of the Malay text. The letters are not inscribed in the usual way but protrude in high relief. Each line of the poem in the inscription is contained inside a frame. The reader is referred to Stutterheim 1936 for further details on the material aspect of the inscription.

The Arabic text is not addressed in this article. It is – or was in 1915 – in an excellent state of preservation. Reading it, however, presents many difficulties because of the florid type of writing. A set of photographs of the two sides of the stone (registration numbers of the Archaeological Service: A 1343 and A 1344) is included in Stutterheim's article (1936 Plates III and IV, between pages 276 and 277).

Line A 1

Line A 1 is read by Stutterheim, Marrison and me as follows:

Stutterheim:	hijrat nabi mungstapa yang prasaddhā
Marrison:	hijrat nabī mungstapa yang prasaddha
vdMolen:	hijrat nabī mungstapa yang prasiddhā

Translation:

Stutterheim:	[after the] hijrah of the Prophet – the chosen One – she who departed
Marrison:	after the flight of the honoured Prophet, she who died
vdMolen:	when had elapsed since the hijrah of the Prophet, the chosen one

Stutterheim's short *i* in *nabi* is a misreading for what Marrison on the basis of metre rewrote as *ī* and what in the inscription is represented by the sign for a long *i*: see the curved bottom line of the wulu. Strangely, and redundantly, the

length of this *ī* is expressed simultaneously by the sign for the long *a*: see the sign under the right leg of the *ba*. The same spelling with this latter sign for the long *a* used for a long *i* is found in *rabbī* in B 3 (but whether the long variety of the wulu is also used there is not clear in the inscription). Stutterheim and Marrison may have overlooked this peculiar spelling as they do not mention it.

Marrison's short final *a* in *prasaddha* is wrong; the inscription clearly has a long *a*. Please note that the double consonant *ddh* is the conventional rendering for *dhdh* in the inscription. I read the same as Stutterheim but not without hesitation: a *da* and a *na* are equally possible.

The useless *prasaddhā* 'tower' of the original has been corrected to *prasiddhā* 'accomplished' by Stutterheim, who translates it as 'deceased'; so does Marrison. In my opinion this revised reading, if correct, does not refer to the departed lady but to the Hijra years that have elapsed: lines 1-3 are about chronology while the lady is introduced only in line 4.

But why read *prasiddhā* if the text has *prasaddhā*? There may be grounds for reading something else than *prasaddhā*. The inscription shows a sign in the form of a small stroke bent to the right which is written over the top right of the *ya* (in *yang*) and extends onto the neighbouring *pa*. Both Stutterheim and Marrison ignore this. Is it an ornament of the *ya* (but why, then, is it far away from the *ya*)? Or is it an unorthodox indication of a long *a* (*yāng*)? Or again, could it represent superscript *i* (*prasiddhā*)? In the latter case its shape is no less unorthodox; moreover, it would be quite out of place, far removed from the *sa* over which it should have been written. If the strange position is due to a lack of space above the *sa*, then one might ask why the same two dots have not been used that replace the wulu in line B 1; see below. Yet another possibility is the sign for the *ě* (called *pepet* in Javanese): *prēsaddhā*, or *prēsandhā* (for *n* instead of *d*, see above). Whether these words mean anything I do not know (could *prēsandhā* mean 'sign', as in Javanese?). The spelling raises suspicions: *rě* following an aksara would be spelled with a special sign, the *keret*, not with a *cakra* and *pepet*. None of these solutions is satisfactory, so I have to leave the problem unsolved. For the time being I will stick to *prasiddhā*.

A strange element for which I have no explanation is the *cecak* in *mungstapa* 'chosen'; the expected spelling is *mustapa*. Stutterheim and Marrison do not give an explanation either.

Line A 2

The second line of stanza A is not problematic:

Stutterheim:	tujuh ratus aṣṭa puluh savarṣṣā
Marrison:	tujuh ratus aṣṭa puluh savarṣṣā
vdMolen:	tūjuh ratus aṣṭapuluh sawarṣṣā

Translation:

Stutterheim: seven hundred eighty and one year
 Marrison: in the year seven hundred and eighty-one
 vdMolen: seven hundred and eighty-one years

The first *u* in *tūjuh* is written as a long *u*; see the indentation at the top of the suku.

Stutterheim has no explanation for the asterisk in this line; he writes: 'The asterisk at the end of this line is also found in the inscription of Rambahan' (Stutterheim 1936:278, note 4). In my opinion it is a filler: the suku of *-puluh* did not leave enough room to put *-rṣṣā* (in *sawarṣṣā*) in the required place, which has been filled with an asterisk instead. I do not know the reason for this apparent horror of empty space. It reinforces the impression that right alignment was important.

Line A 3

The third line of stanza A is also clear:

Stutterheim: hajji catur dān dasa vāra sukra
 Marrison: hajji catur dān dasa vāra sukra
 vdMolen: hajjī catur dān dasa wāra sukkrā

Translation:

Stutterheim: [on] Dzū 'l-hijjah, the fourteenth, Friday
 Marrison: In the month Dzulhijjah, on the fourteenth, a Friday
 vdMolen: On Friday fourteen, month of the Pilgrimage

The *i* in *hajjī* is long because the semi-circle is closed by a curved base-line.

Please note the peculiar spelling of *dān* (instead of the expected *dan*). The sign for this long *a*, besides being peculiar, is also redundant, as the *a* of *dan* is already long by position. The use of *dan* or *dān* is strange anyway: the normal expression is *caturdasa*, not *catur dan dasa*.

In a footnote to this line Stutterheim says: 'What the two small points in the *ka* of *sukra* mean I cannot guess'. I disagree with Stutterheim that only one *ka* is written here. The first vertical of this letter normally consists of a stroke in one go, but here two strokes are visible. Therefore the word must contain two *kas*, one aksara and one pasangan. Other features point in the same direction, for example, the horizontal line connecting the first vertical with the rest of the letter, and the serif at the upper right end of the letter, both of which are visible twice. Stutterheim's two points are not two points, but the central vertical strokes of the two *kas*.

An alternative interpretation is that there is only one *ka* – still not with a dot but with a central vertical stroke – while the *cakra* has been provided with an initial embellishment. This *cakra* happens to be the *cakra* that is of extraordinary length (see the introductory section).

Presumably what made Stutterheim read two dots inside the *ka* is his misreading of the last sign of the line. The final *a* of *sukra* or *sukkra* is long in view of the sign for the long *a* attached to the *ka*. Stutterheim did not recognize this sign as a separate sign but took it for the final part of the *ka*, at the same time interpreting the central vertical of the *ka* (or the verticals of the two *kas*) as a dot.

Line A 4

Line A 4 according to Stutterheim contains the name of the deceased princess. Marrison follows Stutterheim's reading. My reading of this line differs substantially from theirs:

Stutterheim:	rājā imān (varda) raḥmatallāh
Marrison:	rājā imān vāra di raḥmatallāh
vdMolen:	rājātmajā < >nnyāp di raḥmat allāh

Our translations differ accordingly:

Stutterheim:	[was] the Queen of the Faith Varda (?) Rahmatallah
Marrison:	the faithful queen consort was received into the mercy of God
vdMolen:	the royal daughter passed away in the mercy of God

The first difficulty in this line presents itself in the word read by Stutterheim and Marrison as *imān* 'faith', but by me as *atmajā* 'son' or 'daughter'.

Stutterheim comments on the initial *i* of *imān*: 'The *i* of *imān* is quite strange; in fact it consists of a *śa* over a *ta*. The word *rājāśtamān*, however, does not give much sense.' (Stutterheim 1936:279, note 2). Stutterheim's forced reading of an initial *i* rests on the similarity of the sign discussed with the aksara *murda* for the *i*, the so-called *ba cerek*. The latter consists of a *ba* with a wulu-like sign underneath. The inscription happens to contain an example of this in line 7 (*ilāhi*). To me it seems quite difficult to reconcile the sign in line 4 with a *ba cerek*: look at the diagonal line and the serif in the upper half of the letter, neither of which is normally found in a *ba cerek*. Similarly, the square appearance of the lower half of the letter and the serif in it are never found in a *ba cerek*.

If the sign cannot be a *ba cerek* it must represent a different character – or rather two different characters, one aksara and one pasangan. The aksara allows for two interpretations, one of which is mentioned by Stutterheim: a *śa*, a letter which can be described as a *ga* with a horizontal stroke in it. The

other possibility is that it is a *ta*, which also looks like a *ga* but with its first vertical at the bottom showing a small circle or a bulge or a hook to the right (all of these varieties occur elsewhere in the inscription). The character in line 4 shows no more than a dot. Even though a dot seems closer to the horizontal stroke of the *śa* than to the bulge or circle or hook of the *ta*, it cannot be excluded that it is a variety of the *ta* that is written here. This is how I interpret it, as I otherwise find no sensible interpretation of the word.

In the case of the pasangan I also see two possible interpretations: a *ta*, as suggested by Stutterheim, or a *ma*. The inscription contains no other examples of the pasangan *ma*, so no comparison can be made. The usual shape of the pasangan *ma* at about this time can be seen in the facsimile of the inscription of Rambahan, Central Sumatra, 1347 AD, in Kern (1917:167). If the bulge at the upper right stands for a serif, then the pasangan is a *ta*; otherwise there is no reason to prefer *ta* over *ma*. What follows in the inscription permits both interpretations.

Rendering the next letter, Stutterheim has decided on the *ma*. The difficulty is that the claims of the *ja* are equally strong. In combination with the outcome of the preceding discussion two possibilities present themselves: *rājātmajā* 'princess' and *rājāttamā* 'excellent queen' (provided a form *rājāttamā* exists beside the normal *rājottamā*).

In what follows after *rājātmajā* or *rājāttamā* Stutterheim has overlooked that a sign has been inserted: see the sign written below the *ā*, to the right. This is the nga lelet, the sign for *lē* or *l*. Because of its position, at the foot of the *ā*, it looks at first sight like the type of embellishment with which the two preceding signs for the long *a* in this line have been provided. Unfortunately, these have become less clear from wear and therefore prevent the detailed comparison required to be certain. What makes me think of a nga lelet is the horizontal stroke crossing the vertical line of the nga lelet in its pasangan section. In addition, the whole sign has been put in a slanting position, suggesting something put in this place but not belonging here.

Stutterheim and I agree on the next sign, rendered by *n*. The combination of the previous sign and this one yields *ln*.

What then follows is considered by Stutterheim to be the pasangan *va*. His comment is as follows: 'The *va* of *varda* is uncertain. It should be like that of *śvargga* in line B 4. However, there is much difference between the various specimens of one letter in this inscription. A reading *yarda* seems also possible.' (Stutterheim 1936:279, note 3).

I not only agree with Stutterheim that a *ya* seems possible here, in fact I am sure it is a *ya*, although not instead of what Stutterheim thinks is a *va* but in addition to it: it is the pengkal *-ya* followed by the sign for *ā*. The sign written between the aksara *na* and this *-yā* is not necessarily a *va*, however. What it is I find very difficult to decide. It seems closest to a pasangan *ma* or *ba* (or *va* in

Fig. 1. Tombstone of Minye Tujuh, side A (Stutterheim 1936)

Fig. 2. Tombstone of Minye Tujuh, side B (Stutterheim 1936)

Stutterheim's rendering), o a pasangan *na*. The inscription contains one other specimen of the pasangan *na*: in line A 1, where it follows a *ta* (*hijrat nabī*). At first sight the two signs look quite different, but if the interference of the tail of the pengkal *-ya* is taken into consideration, the disparity becomes smaller.

To sum up the result of the discussion so far: I read *lnvyā-* or *lnbyā-* or *lnmyā-* or *lnnyā-*. Which reading is correct can only be decided if we know what follows.

Stutterheim's interpretation of the following sign or complex of signs as *-rda* (the final part of his *varda*) goes against the rules of spelling if indeed a layar is involved, because a layar should be followed by a double consonant. In support of my appeal to spelling I refer to other places in the inscription where a layar is involved: *sawarṣṣā* in line A 2b, *sampurnṇa* in line B 1c (still to be discussed). Hence Stutterheim's *varda* should have been *vardda*. But this is not what the text says: there are not two *das*, there is only one, a pasangan. The preceding aksara is clearly not a *da* but rather one of three possibilities: a *sa* or a *pa*, or perhaps – but less likely, based on what I know this letter to look like generally – a *ḍa*. Combining these three possibilities with the result of the preceding paragraph I arrive at the word *lēnyap* 'disappeared', a word which fits the context. The normal spelling of this word in old texts is *lnnyap*. What we find here is *lnnyāp* with a long *a*, which is odd.

Marrison's reading *vārada* 'granting boons' (Sanskrit *varada*) is derived from Stutterheim's *varda*. As an alternative reading Marrison proposes *vāra di*, i.e. the words for 'noble' and 'in', derived by him in turn from *vārada*. Both his readings are ingenious corrections based on the consideration that the metre requires three syllables of the pattern – ˘ ˘. As the reading *vāra* does not find support in the text of the inscription, however, I cannot accept it.

Two problems remain: the layar and the pasangan *da*. Alternatively, the layar could be an ornament of the aksara over which it has been written. It certainly does not look like a wulu. Still, a wulu is the only sign which makes sense here, as the expression must be *di rahmat Allah* 'in the mercy of God'. I do not see how to reconcile the required meaning with the actual sign, unless one is ready to accept that the sculptor 1. thought he had left too little room for a wulu (actually there is enough room), and then 2. decided that it should be represented by a layar-like stroke. Both steps are strange.

Line B 1

Line B 1 according to Stutterheim contains the names Kédah and Pasai. I have a completely different reading:

Stutterheim: gutra bha(ru)bha sa(ng) mpu hāk kadah pase ma

Marrison: gutra bhasa pihak kadaḥ pase ma

vdMolen: guṇāṇā sampurnṇa di hrat samūhā

Translation:

Stutterheim: [from] the House Bharubha (?), [which] has rights on
Kadah and Pase
Marrison: of the Bhasa clan, possessing Kedah and Pasai
vdMolen: whose virtues were perfect in the whole world

The reader should keep in mind that line B 1 in the inscription is distributed over three lines, 1a, 1b and 1c. In B 1b it is a problem where to continue after the syllable *mpu*: does the final syllable *hā* still belong here, as Stutterheim thinks, or is this syllable the final syllable of line 1c, as I think? I shall tackle this problem first, beginning one syllable before *mpu*, in the middle of 1b. Marrison's imaginative reading will be dealt with later.

Stutterheim's *ng* in *sa(ng)* (the brackets express his doubt) is not a cecak but an embellishment of the *sa*, also found in other lines. Hence the text does not read *sa(ng) mpu* but *sampu*. After *sampu* the line ends; the following sign *hā* belongs to 1c, not to 1b. What follows after *sampu* is the first sign of 1c, rendered by Stutterheim as *kka* (in *hāk kadah*). However, I do not read *kka* but *ṇṇa*, with a layar over *ṇṇa* (which explains the double *ṇa*). This layar has been rendered by Stutterheim as the cakra in *gutra* (the first word of line 1). But a cakra is unlikely, both in view of the form of this sign in the inscription of Minye Tujuh (a curved onset to a straight line which ends in an upward curve) and because of its normal point of connection (exactly at the foot of the last preceding vertical, not between two verticals). A layar looks more like a flattened v of the Latin alphabet (with its lowest point off centre, to the right), which is what we have here.

In order to allow the interpretation of *ṇa* as *ṇa* we must assume that the downward and upward central verticals of this aksara are merged or almost merged. Whether this is probable or not I cannot tell; I only know that this way of writing occurs in ancient manuscripts in Java (sixteenth century and later).

The result of this corrected reading is the word *sampurṇṇa* 'perfect'.

What follows in Stutterheim's reading, *-dah pa* (in *kadah pase*), is wrong for several reasons. In the first place, in transliterating *da* (in *-dah*) Stutterheim neglects the two dots written over the *da*. I know these two dots from ancient manuscripts in Java (going back to the sixteenth century) to represent the vowel *i* in those cases where there is too little room for the usual rendering by a wulu. Whether such a convention existed in ancient Sumatra I do not know, but it is clear that there is a problem of space here. I therefore venture to interpret these two dots as a replacement for the normal wulu, and therefore read *di* instead of *da*.

In the second place, a final *-h* is always, here and elsewhere, rendered by the special sign for it, a wignyan, never by a vowelless aksara *ha*. In this spot

there is clearly an aksara *ha*, not a wignyan, which indicates the beginning of a new word, not the end of a word.

In the third place, Stutterheim's *pa* has to be a pasangan, indicating the vowellessness of the preceding aksara *ha*. However, the sign concerned is written under the *ha*, like a cakra, not after it, as the pasangan *pa* always is, in general as well as in this inscription. In other words, the text reads *hra*, not *-h pa*.

These considerations taken together yield the corrected reading *di hra-*.

The next sign, taken by Stutterheim for the taling *e*, is not an *e* but a *ta*, rendered vowelless by the following pasangan *sa*. It cannot be an *e* in view of the final vertical stroke. Connected with *di hra-* this vowelless *ta* yields *di hrat*, 'in the world'. Or – alternative possibility – is *dihrat* the passive voice of a verb 'to cling to'? In that case the line runs: *gunāñā sampurnña dihrat samūhā*, meaning 'her virtues are perfect; they are clung to by all'. Both interpretations are equally possible.

The sign following the *sa* is not *ma* but *mū*. Nor does it stand by itself as Stutterheim and Marrison have it (as a consequence they did not know what to do with it); rather it is the second syllable of the word *samūhā* 'all, entire'. As I pointed out at the beginning of this section, the aksara *hā* belongs here, in line 1c, not after *sampu* at the end of line 1b.

Turning now to the beginning of line B 1, I find no cakra in *gutra*: see my arguments above on why I think Stutterheim's and Marrison's cakra is not a cakra but a layar. Nor do I recognize a *ta*, *bha*, *ra* (or *ru*) and *bha* where Stutterheim reads these signs in *gutra bha(ru)bha*. To begin with, the *bha* if interpreted correctly would have a highly unconventional appearance, comprising only two-thirds of its usual form; compare the inscription of Rambahan of 1347 AD referred to above. Instead of a *ta*, cakra and *bha*, a more likely interpretation in my opinion is a *ña* followed by the sign (more precisely: one of the signs in this inscription) for a long *a*: not *gutra bha-* but *gunā*. As in *sampurnña*, discussed above, the central verticals of the *ñ* in *gunā* seem to be merged.

Stutterheim's second *bha* in *bha(ru)bha* is equally nonexistent. Its second half again is the sign for the long *a*. Its first half is part of what I find difficult to read but am inclined to interpret as either a *ba* (as distinct from *bha*) or a *ñā*, two letters that look almost the same. A *ra* (or *ru*), as Stutterheim has it, is out of the question: 1. not *-u*, because what would seem to indicate an *-u* in reality stands for the vowel *i* (see my discussion above); in reading an *-u* Stutterheim neglected the other of the two dots; 2. not *ra*, because there is far too much space after the supposed aksara *ra*. Both *gunābā* 'qualities and appearance' and *gunañā* 'her qualities' fit into the context, but as *abā* should have been spelled *abha*, not *aba* – if the word occurs at all in Malay – *gunañā* seems the best solution.

Marrison's corrections of line B 1 are based solely on meeting the requirements of the metre. Looking for four syllables fitting the pattern ˘ – – ˘ between *gutra* and *Kadah*, he reduces Stutterheim's *bha(ru)bha sa(ng) mpu hāk* to *Bhasa pihak*, while he wonders whether the orphaned *ma* at the end of the line, superfluous according to Stutterheim but in agreement with the metre, could be an enclitic like the Latin *-que* 'and' (*kadah pase ma* 'Kedah and Pasai'; Marrison 1951:164).

Like Stutterheim, Marrison by reading *ma* omits the *-ū* of this syllable; like Stutterheim he puts it in the wrong place. There is no need to speculate about an enclitic *ma* if my reading *samūhā* is accepted, as this acknowledges the *-ū* and gives the syllable its place in an existing word.

Marrison's prosodic argument is nullified by this restored reading so that there is no need to invent syllables fitting the metre. Incidentally, his *Bhasa pihak* does not meet his own metrical conditions.

Line B 2

Line B 2 likewise contains several problematic readings. I do not agree with Stutterheim and Marrison, but my interpretation is not free of doubt either. Compare our three versions:

Stutterheim:	tārukk tāsiḥ tanah samuhā
Marrison:	tāruk kayū taṣiḥ tanah samūha
vdMolen:	tāruk. gasihta da<tang> ka samūhā

Translation:

Stutterheim:	having sprouts ... all the world
Marrison:	with all their fields and woods, seas and lands
vdMolen:	expiry of the allotted time (?) befalls all

As in B 1, here too the text is distributed over two lines, 2a and 2b. The problem is to decide what belongs to 2b and what to 2a. There can be no doubt that *samūhā* belongs to the second line. But what about the sign for the *ka* beneath *tāruk*: is it a pasangan in line 2a or an aksara in line 2b? Connected with this is the problem of what the immediately following sign stands for: is it a paten or a pengkal?

I would like to argue that the first sign is an aksara and that a paten has been added with the purpose of helping us to recognize it as an aksara. To add a paten makes it impossible to read the *ka* of the second line as a pasangan, as the spelling rules prohibit the combination of two *kas* and a paten at the end of a word.

Two possible objections are: 1. why use a paten anyway if a pasangan for

the first letter of the next word is available: a *ta* in *tāruk tāsiḥ* (Stutterheim) or a *ga* in *tāruk gāsiḥta* (Van der Molen); 2. why read a *paten* (Stutterheim and Van der Molen), why not a *pengkal*? (Marrison's reading *kayu* 'trees, wood' is not supported by the text of the inscription: *ka* [that is the consonant *k* plus the included vowel *a*] is impossible both before a *paten* and a *pengkal*, whichever applies here, while an *-u* is nowhere to be seen.)

The answer to the first question is in the strict separation of the two successive lines of writing. There is no interlinear space for *pasangans* here. If a *pasangan ta* or *ga* – both written under the preceding *aksara* – had been used this would blur the distinction between *pasangans* of the first and *aksaras* of the second line of writing because they would share the same space. Therefore a *paten* plus *aksara* is used instead of a *pasangan*.

Rejection of a *pengkal* in favour of a *paten* is suggested by meaning: a word *tārukya* does not seem to exist in Malay. But a word *tāruk* 'sprout, shoot' is equally problematic. Or is *tāruk* a variant of *tāruh* 'bet, pledge', to be understood as a reference to life? This is how I take it, for want of a better solution.

The first letter of the next word could be either a *ta* or a *ga*. Stutterheim and Marrison opt for a *ta*; their translation 'sea' tacitly equates the *tasih* of the inscription with *tasik*. I prefer *ga*, as the first syllable of the word *gāsiḥta*, which I propose with due hesitation to consider as a variety of *gāsita* 'consumed' ('the entrusted lifespan having been consumed').

The next letter, a *na*, is not necessarily a *na*. The *na* and *da* have closely resembled each other for a great part of their history. In the present inscription they are almost indistinguishable, the only difference being in how they are drawn. Stutterheim and Marrison read *na* as the middle character of the word *tanaḥ*. I prefer *da* as the first character of a new word.

The reading *tanaḥ* of Stutterheim and Marrison, while including the final syllable of my *gāsiḥta*, omits the sign written between the *na* and the *h*, or, in my reading, between the *da* and the last sign of the word (which is not a *h* in my view). Though not very clear, the most likely reading of this overlooked sign is *ta*. I have to admit that one could just as well read a *bha* or a *suku* followed by a *ra*. What is important is that this sign looks like a *pasangan* but is not: it is an *aksara*. Its cramped position suggests that the sculptor became aware too late that he did not have enough space for it. That it is not a *pasangan* can be seen from its ambiguous position: half under and half after the preceding *aksara*. If I read a *ta* in it, it is because the sharp-pointed dot between its two legs stands for the small circle or bulge or hook to the right which characterizes the left vertical of this letter, while the letter as a whole is completed by the usual serif at the upper right end. This latter element in its turn precludes the presence of a wignyan *h*; accordingly, the inscription shows only one dot which represents the *cecak*, not in its normal superscript position but sunk to a somewhat lower

position in the same way as the aksara it accompanies. The word that emerges from this re-reading is *datang* 'to come'.

Finally, like Stutterheim, I do not have an explanation for the dot under the first *ta* of B 2 (Stutterheim 1936:279, note 6).

Line B 3

The reading of the third line of stanza B raises only a few small questions. The text reads:

Stutterheim: ilāhi yā rabbi tuhan samuhā
 Marrison: ilāhi yā rabbi tuhan samūha
 vdMolen: ilāhi yā rabbī tuhan samuhā

Translation:

Stutterheim: my God, O my Lord, Lord of the Universe
 Marrison: O God, Lord and Master of all
 vdMolen: O God, O Lord and Master of all

Contrary to Stutterheim and Marrison I read a long *i* in *rabbī*. The reason for this is the presence of the same sign for the long vowel also found in A 1, which in other lines is used to indicate long *a*. I am not sure whether it is the long or the short variety of the wulu which is used; the inscription is insufficiently clear.

Marrison's long *u* and short final *a* in *samūha*, inspired by the metric pattern he adheres to, do not find support in the inscription; the inscription has *samuhā*.

The *na* of *tuhan* is difficult to read because the inscription is worn down in this spot.

Line B 4

The readings:

Stutterheim: tāruḥ dalam śvargga tuhan tatuhā
 Marrison: tāruḥ dalam śvargga tuhan tatūhā
 vdMolen: tāruḥ dalam. śwargga tuhan tatuhā

Translation:

Stutterheim: place [our] first Lord in heaven
 Marrison: keep our exalted mistress in heaven
 vdMolen: place our exalted mistress in heaven

Left untransliterated by Stutterheim and Marrison and therefore invisible in their transliteration is the paten after *dalam*; in my transliteration it is rendered by a full stop. It may have been inserted in the Malay text due to lack of space. Otherwise one would expect the following consonant cluster *św* to have been written underneath the *ma* of *dalam*. The insertion of a paten is a frequently used remedy to save space.

The last word of the line reads *tatuhā*, not *tatūhā* with long *-u* as Marrison has it. The three characters *na*, *ta* and *ta* in the middle of *tuhan tatuhā* are worn and therefore difficult to read.

Like Stutterheim, I do not know what the dot under the *ha* of *tuhan* means (Stutterheim 1936:279, note 8).

Concluding remarks

It will have become clear from the above discussion that Minye Tujuh is quite reluctant to disclose the state of its affairs, in spite of the shortness of the text and the good condition of our source. While some of the passages are easy to read (thanks to the foundations laid by Stutterheim and Djajadiningrat), other passages resist interpretation to the extent that one can only venture an educated guess based on a speculative identification of the letters in combination with what knowledge we have of ancient spelling conventions and the structure of the text. If my reading of the inscription is nevertheless accepted, several conclusions can be drawn.

In the first place, contrary to what Stutterheim thought, the names of the royal princess and her dynasty are not mentioned; nor are Kedah and Pasai. Instead, we find general statements about the social status and moral esteem of the deceased.

In the second place, contrary to what Marrison thought, the text does not follow the rules of Sanskrit prosody: the pattern that manifests itself in line A 1 and which happens to be similar to the Upajāti metre, is discontinued in the following lines and therefore is not a pattern (actually there are three lines in the entire poem with a pattern similar to the Upajāti metre; all other lines deviate).

In the third place, contrary to Marrison and in agreement with Stutterheim, we find the rules of the Malay syair applied, as to rhyme but also, in addition to what Stutterheim found, in having four words to the line. One important consequence is that the Malay syair appears two centuries earlier in history than has generally been assumed, not around 1600 but in 1380, as claimed by Stutterheim.

One might wonder why the text makes a distinction between long and short vowels if this does not serve prosodic purposes. My surmise is that it

may have to do with spelling conventions. Words of Sanskrit origin in the Minye Tujuh inscription are spelled with long vowels, aspirated consonants and the like: *wāra* and *guṇa* for example. Similarly, Arabic loanwords betray their non-Austronesian background by the presence of long vowels where these belong: *nabī*, *Allāh* and so on. But why do Malay words like *tūjuh* and *dān* contain long vowels? Does this perhaps reflect the way of writing Malay in Arabic script, projected back into the old script? If so, 'Arabic' influence would show through after all, albeit quite differently from how this was perceived by Stutterheim. However, in that case one might ask why words like *ratus* and *datang* are not also spelled with a long *a*. Are these mistakes? Do they reflect spelling rules unknown to us? This I cannot yet answer.

In the fourth place the Minye Tujuh inscription indeed gives the impression of Arabic writing, not through the style of writing as claimed by Stutterheim and De Casparis, but rather in the lay-out of the inscription.

Table 1. Text and translation of the poem. Synoptic table.

	Stutterheim	Marrison	Van der Molen
A	1 hijrat nabi mungstapa yang prasaddhā	hijrat nabī mungstapa yang prasaddha	hijrat nabī mungstapa yang prasiddhā
	2 tujuh ratus aṣṭa puluh savarṣṣā	tujuh ratus aṣṭa puluh savarṣṣā	tūjuh ratus aṣṭapuluh sawarṣṣā
	3 hajji catur dān dasa vāra sukra	hajji catur dān dasa vāra sukra	hajji catur dān dasa wāra sukkṛā
	4 rājā imān (varda) raḥmatallāh	rājā imān vāra di raḥmatallāh	rajjātmajā <ḍ>nyāp di rahmat allāh
B	1 gutra bha(ru)bha sa(ng) mpu hāk kadah pase ma	gutra bhasa pihak kadah pase ma	guṇānā sampurna di hrāt samūhā
	2 tārukḱ tāsiḥ tanah samuhā	tāruk kayū taṣiḥ tanah samūha	tāruk. gāsiḥta da<tang> ka samūhā
	3 ilāhi yā rabbi tuhan samuhā	ilāhi yā rabbi tuhan samūha	ilāhi yā rabbi tuhan samuhā
	4 tāruḥ dalam śvargga tuhan tatuḥā.	tāruḥ dalam śvargga tuhan tatūhā	tāruḥ dalam. śwargga tuhan tatuḥā
A	1 [After the] hijrah of the Prophet – the chosen	After the flight of the honoured Prophet,	When had elapsed since the hijrah of the Prophet,
	2 One – she who departed,	she who died,	the chosen one,
	3 seven hundred eighty and one year,	In the year seven hundred and eighty-one,	Sevenhundred and eighty-one years,
	3 [on] Dzū 'l-hijjah, the fourteenth, Friday;	In the month Dzulhijjah, on the fourteenth, a Friday,	On Friday fourteen, month of the Pilgrimage,
B	4 [was] the Queen of the Faith Varda (?)	The faithful queen consort was received into the mercy of God.	The royal daughter passed away in the mercy of God.
	1 [from] the House Bharubha (?), [which] has rights on Kadah and Pase,	Of the Bhasa clan, possessing Kedah and Pasai,	Her virtues were perfect in the whole world.
	2 having sprouts ... all the world.	With all their fields and woods, seas and lands,	Expiry of the allotted time (?) befalls all.
	3 My God, O my Lord, Lord of the Universe,	O God, Lord and Master of all,	O God, o Lord and Master of all,
	4 place [our] first Lord in heaven!	Keep our exalted mistress in heaven.	Place our exalted mistress in heaven.

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