
A few years ago, a manuscript entitled Panton Malaijoe dan Portugees, presumably originating from Batavia (now Jakarta), produced somewhere between the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth century, was rediscovered in the collection of archives at Lisbon’s National Museum of Archeology. For more than ninety years, it was thought to have vanished but it happened to be located in a box together with other manuscripts, found again in the collection of the Portuguese linguist José Leite de Vasconcelos (1858–1941). It has been assigned the shelf-number COD.101 of the latter’s archives. The first known owner was the German Orientalist Ernst Reinhold Rost (1822–1896), sometime head librarian at the India Office Library, London, who around 1865 bought the manuscript from a bookseller in London. The manuscript was lent and subsequently left to Hugo Schuchardt (1842–1927), a German Romanist with a special interest in language contact and language mixing, who used this manuscript in his publications on Malayo-Portuguese creoles. In turn, Leite de Vasconcelos received the document in 1927, bequeathed to him in Schuchardt’s will.

The edition is a bilingual book in Portuguese and English. The editorial team, which has presented a text edition of this exceptional manuscript, has done an exemplary job, offering us a unique glimpse into the cultural life of a very specific group of mixed-Asian bilingual people in Batavia, known as Mardijkers. The manuscript is presented in facsimile, whereas the handwritten text (in Latin script) is deciphered in a diplomatic edition, conveniently printed in the margin (pp. 162–243). The manuscript contains 376 quatrains, arranged in 11 sequences. Most of the sequences in Malayo-Portuguese creole are called Cantiga or Song, while those in Malay are given the name of panton or pantoon (Standard Malay pantun). Intriguingly, as Gijs Koster (p. 139) explains, the Panton Dari Sitie Lela maijan (sequence J, fol. 30r–32v; 29 quatrains) treats a story otherwise known from the Syair Sinyor Kosta/Kista (aka Syair Silambari and Syair Sinyor Gilang): at the beginning, it is still remarkably close in wording to versions of the syair, but then turns in quite another direction. This is not easy reading material for a twenty-first-century public, so that the scholarly apparatus treating different aspects of the manuscript, together with renditions of Mardijker Malay into Modern Standard Malay/Indonesian, is most helpful. Dis-
playing careful attention to detail, this group of outstanding specialists has
provided a first-rate resource for anyone who wants to study this rare primary
source.

Nevertheless, a fair number of puzzles for the philologist remain. For exam-
ple, at the beginning of the *Pantoon Malaijo Panhiboeran hati Doeka dan Piloô*,
the word *hoedana* (occurring twice at the end of a line) is explained as “prob-
ably an error for Standard Malay *udara* ‘sky’” (p. 326), which, although making
perfect sense, unfortunately (in both cases) does not match the rhyming word
*sana*. The most useful online rhyming dictionary RimaKata.com helped me to
find *gegana* (from Sanskrit *gagana* ‘atmosphere, sky, firmament, air’), which is
a literary synonym (equally trisyllabic) of the mundane word *udara*. The line
which is rendered into Standard Malay as *Pintu gerbang berlarang-lurung* (used
twice) is translated as “the main gate has girders” (p. 261), based upon the inter-
pretation of *lurung* as a loan from “Javanese *dlurung* ‘ledger, girder[?]’” (p. 260),
but, in my opinion, it could be an example of poetic deformation of *berlarang-
larang*, with the element *lurung* used *metri causa* as matching rhyming word
(in both cases) for *burung*. The idea seems to be that the main gate “does not
allow [entry],” so it is (firmly) closed.

If one should wish to nitpick, the only thing missing is an index and a list of
problematic words in order to facilitate access even more. However, this excel-
ient edition, which takes away as many difficulties as possible, permits diverse
forms of analysis from different scholarly disciplines, and is highly recommen-
ded especially for linguists, literature specialists, and historians.

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