

# A FAMOUS PANTUN

from

## MARSDEN'S MALAYAN GRAMMAR

### I. The Malay Text in the Original Jawi Script:

This text was published in *A Grammar of the Malayan Language with an Introduction and Praxis* by William Marsden, London 1812, pp. 208-209. In 1984 Oxford University Press published a photographic reprint of that work with the title *A Dictionary and Grammar of the Malayan Language* by William Marsden with an Introduction by Russell Jones. The original manuscript of the pantun is probably preserved in the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London. See M.C. Ricklefs and P. Voorhoeve, *Indonesian Manuscripts in Great Britain: a Catalogue of Manuscripts in Indonesian Languages in British Public Collections*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, London, 1977, p. 157, MS12158(4).

كوڤو ٢ تربغ ملنتغ	تربغ دلاوت دھوجغ كارغ
ھات ددالم منارہ بمبغ	در دھول سمھي سكارغ
تربغ دلاوت دھوجغ كارغ	بورغ نسور تربغ كبندن
در دھول سمھي سكارغ	بايق مود سده كفنديغ
بورغ نسور تربغ كبندن	بولوش لاک جاتہ كفتاني
بايق مود سده كفنديغ	تياد سام مداك اين
بولوش جاتہ كفتاني	دو قولہ انق مرقات
تياد سام مداك اين	سٹكہ فندي ممبوجق ھات

### II. Marsden's Translation:

Butterflies sport on the wing around,  
They fly to the sea by the reef of rocks.  
My heart has felt uneasy in my breast,  
From former days to the present hour.

They fly to the sea by the reef of rocks.  
The vulture wings its flight to *Bandan*.  
From former days to the present hour,  
Many youths have I admired.

The vulture wings its flight to Bandan.  
Dropping its feathers at *Patani*.  
Many youths have I admired,  
But none to compare with my present choice.

His feathers he let fall at *Patani*.  
A score of young pigeons.  
No youth can compare with my present choice.  
Skilled as he is to touch the heart.

### III. The Text Transliterated into the new Rumi spelling:

- (1) Kupu-kupu terbang melintang  
Terbang di laut di hujung karang
- (2) Hati di dalam menaruh bimbang  
Dari dahulu sampai sekarang
- (3) Terbang di laut di hujung karang  
Burung nasur (nasar) terbang ke Bandan
- (4) Dari dahulu sampai sekarang  
Banyak muda sudah kupandang
- (5) Burung nasur (nasar) terbang ke Bandan  
Bulunya lagi jatuh ke Patani
- (6) Banyak muda sudah kupandang  
Tiada sama mudaku ini
- (7) Bulunya jatuh ke Patani  
Dua puluh anak merpati
- (8) Tiada sama mudaku ini  
Sungguh pandai membujuk hati

### IV. Ernest Fouinet's French Translation:

Fouinet's translation appeared in the *Notes* at the end of Victor Hugo's *Les Orientales*. See Elizabeth Barineau's critical edition of *Les Orientales*, Paris: Marcel Didier, 1954, II, 215-216. His translation also appeared in Théodore Faullain de Banville's *Petit Traité de Poésie Française*, Paris: G. Charpentier, 1881, p. 244.

Les papillons jouent a l'entour sur leurs ailes;  
Ils volent vers la mer, près de la chaîne des rochers.  
Ma coeur s'est senti malade dans ma poitrine,  
Depuis mes premiers jours jusqu'à l'heure présente.

Ils volent vers la mer, près de la chaîne des rochers...  
Le vautour dirige son essor vers *Bandam*.  
Depuis mes premiers jours jusqu'à l'heure présente,  
J'ai admiré bien des jeunes gens.

Le vautour dirige son essor vers *Bandam*...  
 Et laisse tomber de ses plumes à *Patani*.  
 J'ai admiré bien des jeunes gens;  
 Mais nul n'est à comparer à l'objet de mon choix.

Il laisse tomber de ses plumes à *Patani*...  
 Voici deux jeunes pigeons!  
 Aucun jeune homme ne peut se comparer à celui de mon choix.  
 Habile comme il l'est à toucher le cœur.

## V. A Note on the Meter of the Malay Text.

Several methods of scanning Malay poetry have been proposed by scholars. Marsden presents what he considers the rules of Malay prosody and versification in his *Grammar* on pages 118-136. Following these rules one can say that each line of this pantun is divided into two hemistichs and each hemistich is divided into four feet. Each foot consists of either two or three syllables. If, as claimed by Marsden, word stress in Malay generally falls on the penultimate syllable of a root word, a two-syllable foot will then have the stress on the first syllable and a three-syllable foot will have the stress on the middle syllable. The first hemistich of the poem can thus be scanned as follows:

| — ◡ | — ◡ | — ◡ | ◡ — ◡ |

And the second hemistich as follows:

| — ◡ | ◡ — ◡ | ◡ — ◡ | — ◡ |

Notice that the first hemistich of line 7, which is supposed to be the same as the second hemistich of line 5, lacks the word “lagi.” Moreover, the meter of neither hemistich seems to be consistent with the meter in the rest of the poem. For a somewhat similar theory of Malay prosody, also based on stress, see G.L. Koster and H. Maier, “Variation within Identity in the *Syair Ken Tambuhan* Explained with the Help of a Computer,” in *Indonesia Circle*, No. 29 (November 1982), pp. 3-17. A quite different theory of Malay prosody based on word clusters rather than stress is given by Philip L. Thomas in his article “*Syair and Pantun Prosody*,” in *Indonesia*, Vol. 27 (April 1979), pp. 51-64. On the question of word stress in Malay and Indonesian see *Experimental Studies in Indonesian Prosody*, edited by Cecilia Odé and Vincent J. van Heuven with the assistance of Ellen van Zantan, Leiden, 1994.

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