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Persia and the Malay World: Commercial and Intellectual Exchanges

Abstract: *This article endeavours to review all known data about the relations, both direct and indirect, between Persia and the Malay World, from the earliest times up to the 17th century. Very early in the first centuries of our era, during the Sassanid period, we can observe the movements of people and commercial products. Contacts became more important after the rise of Islam. Small Persian communities (merchants and clerics) settled in various harbours of the Archipelago had an influence on Malay culture out of proportion with their number. An influence that is reflected by Persian texts translated into Malay and Javanese, by fragments of Persian Sufi poetry quoted in Malay works, and again by the various roles of Persian thinkers, like for instance the Sufi master Shams Tabrīz, in Malay and Javanese cultures. However, relations started to fade away with the advent of the Safavids and the decline of the Mughal empire.*

Keywords: Persian History, Indonesian History, History of Islam, Malay Literature, Indonesian Islam.

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Abstrak: *Artikel ini berusaha merumuskan semua data yang diketahui tentang hubungan, baik langsung maupun bukan, antara Persia dan Alam Nusantara, dari masa paling awal sampai abad ke-17. Sangat dini pada zaman Masehi, selama era Sassanid, terlihat adanya pertukaran orang dan produk dagang. Hubungan menjadi lebih padat sesudah perkembangan agama Islam. Komunitas kecil orang Persia (pedagang dan cendekiawan) yang bermukim di berbagai pelabuhan Nusantara mempunyai pengaruh atas kebudayaan Melayu yang amat besar dibandingkan jumlah mereka. Pengaruh tersebut tercermin dalam karya-karya Parsi yang diterjemahkan ke dalam bahasa Melayu dan Jawa, dalam petikan-petikan puisi sufi Parsi yang dikutip dalam sejumlah karya Melayu, serta dalam berbagai peran beberapa pemikir Persia, seperti misalnya pemuka sufi Shams Tabrīz, dalam kebudayaan Melayu dan Jawa. Namun hubungan-hubungan itu mulai pudar dengan perkembangan kekuasaan kaum Safavid dan merosotnya Kekaisaran Mongol.*

Kata kunci: Sejarah Persia, Sejarah Indonesia, Sejarah Islam, Sastra Melayu, Islam Indonesia.

ملخص: تحاول هذه المقالة أن تستخلص جميع البيانات المعروفة حول العلاقات –مباشرة كانت أو غير مباشرة– بين بلاد فارس ونوسانتارا، منذ العصور الأولى وحتى القرن السابع عشر. من الملاحظ في الوقت المبكر للغاية من الزمن المسيحي، خلال العصر الساساني، ظور ثفقتبادل الناس والمنتجات التجارية. أصبحت العلاقة أكثر كثافة بعد ظهور الإسلام. حيث إن المجتمعات الصغيرة من الفرس (التجار والمثقفين) التي استقرت في موانئ مختلفة من نوسانتارا بدأت تتمتع بتأثير على الثقافة الميلايووية بصورة كبيرة لا تتناسب مع عددهم. وانعكس هذا التأثير في الأعمال الفارسية المترجمة إلى الميلايووية والجاوية، في مقتطفات من الشعر الصوفي الفارسي المقتبس في بعض الأعمال الميلايووية، ومن خلال عدد من الأدوار للمفكرين الفرس، مثل الرائد الصوفي شمس تبريز، في الثقافتين الميلايووية والجاوية. إلا أن هذه العلاقات بدأت تتلاشى مع تطور سلطة الصفويين وانحطاط إمبراطورية المغول.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التاريخ الفارسي، التاريخ الإندونيسي، التاريخ الإسلامي، الأدب الميلايوي، الإسلام الإندونيسي.

It is a sort of state of the art of our knowledge of the relations between Persia and the Malay world that we propose to present in this note, from data collected a long time ago or more recently by historians. The purpose is of course to show the nature, duration and intensity of these exchanges in the long term, but also to draw attention to the need for further research in this field which, without being totally neglected, has certainly not yet attracted all the interest it deserves in order to understand the formation of the Nusantarian culture.

The Sassanid Period

It is not easy to grasp the beginnings of trade between Persia and South-East Asia. The reasons are obvious. The sources in Pehlevi have almost disappeared after the Muslim conquest, while in the Malay world, writings prior to the 8th century are limited to rare and laconic epigraphs. The only available texts, Chinese and Greek, are therefore from third-party civilizations. Only a very limited number of them still exist and their interpretation is often difficult. They have also been so often questioned to the point of being squeezed hard that it seems futile to expect new revelations. The greatest hope therefore lies in archaeological research, as long as it is more oriented towards the oldest, rarely spectacular, urban sites, and better takes into account elements that go beyond the national horizon.

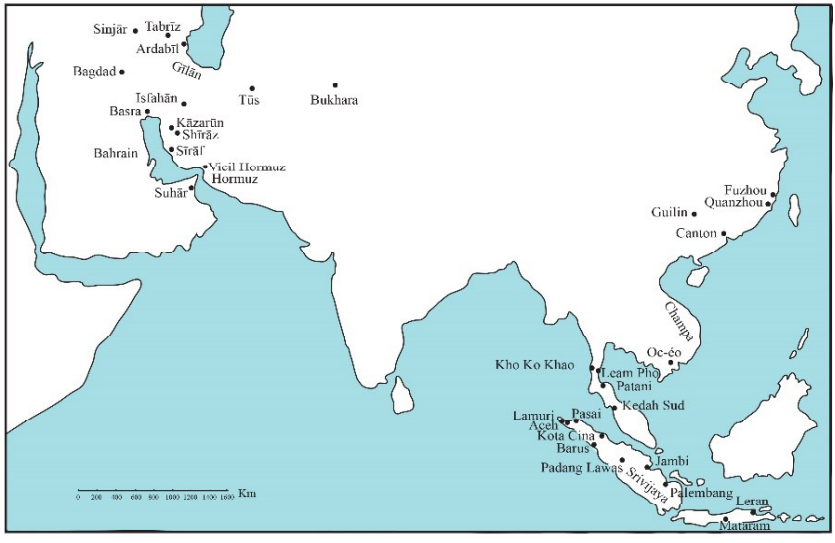

Fig. 1. Places of origin and settlement of Persian and Arab-Persian merchants, and archaeological sites.

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The sources, though few in number, make it possible to assert that the exchanges between Persia and the Malay world—without paying attention to the question, constituting the central point of Wolters' thesis (1967), whether these exchanges were direct or indirect—certainly go back to the Sassanid era.

Thanks to the testimonies of Cosmas Indicopleustes and Procopius, it is known that, as early as the first half of the 6th century, Ceylon was the principal place of exchange on the maritime route connecting China to Persia between the two halves of the Indian Ocean and that a community of Iranian merchants lived in that island, enjoying certain privileges, such as the monopoly of the silk trade (Wolters 1967, 74). Several testimonies seem to show that at this time and even earlier, some of them continued their way much further to the East.

Pursuing the work of Wheatley and Wolters, Colless (1969, 12–13) puts in parallel two pieces of information of Chinese origin: The first, borrowed from the "Liang Chronicle", states that "The eastern border of Dunsun is in communication with Jiaozhou (Tonkin) and the western border with Tianzhu (India) and Anxi (Parthia)". The second, from Zhu Zhi's Funanji, asserts that "the kingdom of Dunsun is a Funan dependency. Its king is called Kunlun. In this country there are 500 Hu families from India" (Pelliot 1903, 279).

It is agreed to identify Dunsun with the Malay Peninsula or perhaps with the northern part of it. On the identity of these Hu, Colless notes that Schafer, relying on the authority of Chavannes and Pelliot, says that, at least in the Tang era, "they were predominantly Iranians, namely, Persians, Sogdians and inhabitants of West Turkestan" (Schafer 1951, 409; Cited by Colless 1969, 13).

In other words, this would be the first mention of a community of Persians living in the Malay world, and there is every reason to believe that these Iranians came by sea rather than by land. The difficult question of whether these quotations refer to the third, or the fifth–sixth centuries will not be settled here. Some archaeological data collected in Southeast Asia only confirm these links with Sassanid Persia. Among the archaeological material found at the Oc-eo site in the Mekong Delta, Malleret (1962, 304) reports the presence of an intaglio representing a libation at a fire altar, clearly Zoroastrian, and a glass cabochon bearing a Sassanid effigy. The dating of these objects by this author is not clear but should, in any case, be located between

the third and 6th century. Moreover, in the region where the Dunsun country is mentioned, on the isthmus of Kra, a 5th century Sassanid coin was found in the Yarang district of Patani province (Chāt 1996, 246, 270). A few kilometers from the sea, there is in this same district a set of Hindu temples in ruins that people agree until today to date back to the 6th century. This monetary find, however unsignificant it appears at first glance, takes on quite a different meaning when put into a broader geographical context. It is known that Sassanid coins were found in Ceylon (Bopearachchi 1993, 63–87) and that others were also discovered in South China (Salmon 2004, 23–58 Note. 21). These various places of discovery thus show coherently a sea route connecting the Sassanid empire with Ceylon and this island with the China Sea and thus passing through the Malay world.

Two well-known Chinese written documents from Buddhist monks may support this archaeological deduction for the Sassanid period. The first is the famous testimony, dated about 692, of the Chinese monk Yijing, who, in order to go to India, took a ship in Canton which took him to Srivijaya and whose captain was Bosi. The second, dated 719, reports the voyage of the Indian prince Vajrabodhi who, wishing to go to China, met in Ceylon thirty-five ships of Bosi who took with him the road to Srivijaya (Ferrand 1913, 637). A certain ambiguity hovers over these two testimonies since, as Laufer (1919, 468–87) has shown, the term Bosi, which usually refers to "Persians", sometimes also refers to the populations of Insulindia.

Less questionable seems to be the commercialization of camphor. This aromatic product is extracted from Dryobalanops, an endemic tree of the equatorial Insulindian forest, where it was exploited, before the 10th century, in Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula. However, we learn from the Ancient Letters found at Dunhuang in China (Sims-Williams 1996, 48), that, as early as the 4th century, this product was marketed in China by the Sogdians who traveled the land silk-road. The fact that it arrived from the west suggests that the camphor first passed through Persia before reaching China, a prodigious journey. The presence of this drug in the Middle East is well attested from the 6th century in medical treatises. The fact that it is quoted without further explanation in medical recipes clearly shows that it was already well known to practitioners. Proof of this is that it also appears in non-specialized Persian literature. Camphor is indeed mentioned in a text

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in Pehlevi, *King Husrav and His Page*, dating back to the time of the ruler Chosroes I Anushirvan (531-579), and in another text, also in Pehlevi, the *Visramiani*, where it is even quoted more than ten times (Donkin 1999, 108)Borneo and Sumatra, but long-distance trade took it to societies at the geographical poles of demand - China and the medieval West already in late Antiquity (ca. 6th century A.D..

Another source, in Syriac this time, the *Book of Medicines*, dating back either to the Sassanid period or to the very first moments of the Islamic period, shows that Indonesian camphor was then perfectly known in this region (Donkin 1999, 110)Borneo and Sumatra, but long-distance trade took it to societies at the geographical poles of demand - China and the medieval West already in late Antiquity (ca. 6th century A.D.. It is known that during the capture of Ctesiphon, on the Tigris, in 636-637, the Arab-Muslim attackers discovered in the palace of Chosroes II, large jars full of this product which they took for salt (Weill 1845, 1, 75). This anecdote clearly shows that Insulindian camphor reached the Sassanid empire in significant quantities. Should we deduce, as does Wolters (1967, 149), that camphor was then "a rare perfume for the imperial palace" or, on the contrary, that the sovereign was not disinterested in the marketing of a distant product and therefore inevitably expensive?

The agents of this camphor trade are of course unknown to us. We have just seen that the Sogdians took part in this trade on the land silk road. It is not impossible that they did the same on the sea road. In any case some scattered data suggest that they also borrowed the latter.

The fact is that Amoghavajra, one of the introducers of Tantrism in China, born in Ceylon in 705, had a Sogdian mother and at the age of ten was taken by his uncle to the South Seas, or, according to another version, directly to China. On the site of Ku Bua, in Thailand, fragments of reliefs were found, dated from the beginning of the time of the kingdom of Dvāravatī, in the 6th century, representing characters wearing a curious cap the tip of which falls to the front, a little like the Phrygian cap. These characters could be identified as Sogdian (Grenet 1996, 65–84). If this identification were confirmed, it would show that a community of merchants was established in this region, since it is hard to imagine that mere traders in transit could be the subject of a representation in stone. Whatever the case, it seems plausible since we know that a bowl bearing an inscription supposedly Sogdian was

found in Suiqi, in southern China, and that the tomb of a man from Bukhara, dated from the turn of the 8th century, was found in Guilin in Guangxi. The situation of the latter, accessible from Canton by waterway, probably implies that the deceased had come by sea. A little later, it is true, in the 10th century, Masʿūdī (1861, 307–12) tells the story of a merchant from Samarkand who travelled by sea to go to Canton, passing through Kalah, a kingdom on the Malay peninsula. These examples would be the first evidence that traders from Central Asia, with long commercial experience, also played an important role in inter-Asian sea trade, as we will see more examples below.

Besides the Sogdians, it seems that another group has helped to form the Iranian diaspora settled in the South Seas and in particular in the Malay world, that of the Nestorian Christians. Colless (1969, 20–21) showed that the metropolitan of Rev Ardashir, in Fārs, was probably responsible for Nestorian communities scattered on the coasts of India, at least since the 5th century of our era and in any case that, from the middle of the 7th century, the leaders of this church included under the term "India" a vast region including also the country of "Kalah", whose precise situation remains a subject of debate but which, as we have just said, was certainly on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula. This testimony would therefore indicate that at the end of the Sassanid period, there lived in Malay waters a community of Nestorians dependent on the Fars. This presence is not really surprising when we consider that these Eastern Christians of the Nestorian faith were settled along the western coast of India and in particular Kerala, in Kullam, the ancient Quilon, as well as in Ceylon (Indicopleustès 1976; Cited by Colless 1969, 14) and that their presence is also attested in South China as the grave of one of them dated 707-709 was found in Guilin, in Guangxi. It is generally accepted that their dispersion in the Indian Ocean and in China was caused by their persecution by the Zoroastrians. Colless wonders if the 500 Hu families mentioned above do not correspond to Nestorian Christians fleeing that persecution. In any case their presence in Insulindia seems hardly doubtful.

At the beginning of the 17th century, the Portuguese-Malay Manuel Godinho de Eredia, whose Portuguese father had married the daughter of a king from Sulawesi, discovered in Malacca, near his house, built on the site of the house of one Raja Mudelyar, the Tamil shahbandar of this city of which the Malay chronicle *Sejarah Melayu* speaks abundantly,

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a bronze plate with a Nestorian cross (Eredia 1882), which no more exists. Is it an object dating from the time of the Sultanate of Malacca or more probably from an older period, from, for example, the nearby city of Klang, which Colless identifies with the ancient toponym Kalah?

Moreover, an Arabic compilation, translated as *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and Neighboring Countries* (1895, 300), attributed to Abū Ṣāliḥ al-Armanī and written in Egypt in the 12th century, records the presence of a strong Eastern Christian community in Fansur. There is even mention of a church dedicated to the Virgin Mary. The mention that "camphor comes from there" leaves little room for doubt as to the identification of this toponym with Barus. This community is quoted in the text after a notice about Kullam on the coast of Kerala, a town and a region with which Barus was certainly in contact. Y. Bakker (1974, 19–40), who first paid attention to this text, notes that, to write his story, Abū Ṣāliḥ has compiled among other books the *Kitāb Naẓm al-Jawhar*, dated 910, by Saʿīd al-Batrim, a historian of the Christian church. In this book, according to Bakker, mention is made of a letter from Bishop Ishoyabh of the year 650 stating that a Christian community resides "in Kalah and in the neighboring islands to the south" and "that several clerics have gone in Egypt to ask for a bishop". Bakker deduces from this that the Nestorian presence at Barus mentioned by Abū Ṣāliḥ is to be placed in the middle of the 7th century. Archaeological excavations around the present-day town of Barus, on the west coast of Sumatra, have failed to verify this information, as the site of the city prior to the mid-9th century was not found.

The Islamic Period

Written Documents

It is much easier to understand the relations between Persia and the Insulindian world with the multiplication of documents starting with the 9th century. It is from this period that the first flowering of Middle Eastern works dates; it spreads over a century and a half and includes well-known works such as *Akhbār al-Ṣind wa al-Hind*, dated 851, or Ibn Khordadhbih's more or less contemporary *Kitāb al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, the writings of Abū Zayd dated 916 and of Abū Dulaf, the *Golden Prairies* (*Mūruj al-dhahab*) of Masʿūdī from the mid-10th century, the Persian geography *Ḥudūd al-ʿalām* of 982, which quotes toponyms of the Malay world, or *The Wonders of India*

(*ʿAjāʿib al-Hind*) of Buzurg from the turn of the 11th century (Tibbetts 1979, 25–48). These famous texts, which are regarded as compilations made from testimonies of sailors collected in the ports of the Persian Gulf and in particular in Siraf, the great harbour of the time, testify to the knowledge of the Malay world in Persia since many cities and kingdoms of this region are mentioned.

The attempt to give a global vision of the sea route to China, as imprecise as it may look to us today, seems to show that it was not a recent discovery but a sum of knowledge gathered in the course of numerous experiments initiated a long time before. These works certainly reflect the intellectual flourishing of society in the golden period of the Abassids, when scholars sought to rationalize and record the state of knowledge, more than the more pragmatic experiences of merchants or sailors, more sensitive to the dangers of the unknown and the profits to be expected from exotic products brought back in their country.

The importance of this literary production on navigation to the Far East in general and the Malay world in particular, written by Persians or in Persian circles, had struck the orientalist G. Ferrand to the point that he wrote a long article (Ferrand 1924, 193–257) to prove somewhat excessively that it was entirely of Persian origin. Nevertheless, the Persian ships played a vital role on the main shipping route. Tibbetts reaches the conclusion that "odd references here and there and mention of personal names in particular, show that Persians took a considerable part in this commerce" (Tibbetts 1957, 43).

Archaeological Documents

These maritime exchanges seemed until recent decades to have left no local trace in the Malay world. It is true that archeological research in the region was primarily concerned with the monumental remains of Indian origin, as well as the epigraphs in scripts derived from Indian models. In a second phase, much later, the shards of Chinese ceramics that appear in large numbers on virtually all the ancient sites since the 8th century until very recent times have been taken into account. They had the double advantage of being of a solid material allowing them to cross the centuries without alteration and to be remarkable daters of the studied sites.

The interest in objects from the Middle East is much more recent and owes much to the British archaeologist Alastair Lamb, who did

intense research in this direction in the 1960s. This can be explained both by their lower density on the sites and by the disintegration, easy in the climatic conditions of the equatorial zone, of the earthenware paste of the ceramics of the Near East. Finally, studies of urban sites, mostly ports, constitute a very recent trend in Insulindia and many of them have not yet produced systematic publications.

This short reminder of the history of archeology in Insulindia appears necessary to explain that the data we have today on the Middle Eastern remains in this region are still very fragmentary and that their number certainly will grow significantly in the next few years if excavations are continued and published.

The oldest known archaeological evidence from the Persian Gulf dates back to the 9th century. A shipwreck has been discovered in the Malacca Strait between Bangka and Billiton Islands. Datable to the 9th century, its cargo included a large amount of Chinese ceramics as well as goldsmith pieces of Chinese manufacture but with a style strongly marked by foreign influences. The study of the ship's structure showed that it was not Chinese and that the techniques used to build it are those used in a shipyard in the Indian Ocean, the Near East or India.

A search conducted on the sites of Ko Kho Khao and Laem Pho, on both sides of the isthmus of Kra, has uncovered a large number of ceramic shards and fragments of glass from the Persian Gulf. Among the first white-stained and turquoise-glazed types are represented (Bronson 1996, 181–200). Fragments of this same 9th century turquoise pottery were found in Chon Buri Province, central Thailand (Srisuchat 1996, 246). Further south, on the Malay Peninsula, in the southern part of Kedah, on the site of Sungai Mas, turquoise-type ceramics were found, as well as other types (Jacq-Hergoualc'h 1992, 45, 73) from the 10th-11th centuries, as well as Near Eastern glasses. This material coming totally or at least largely from the Persian Gulf has unfortunately not yet been studied and published. The quantities of fragments found seem to have been very large, according to my own observation, during a short visit to the reserves.

In Indonesia, during the time of Dutch colonization, a "treasure" was discovered in Central Java on the slopes of Mount Merapi, near the location of Mataram kingdom's political power. Next to 9th century Chinese dishes, it included two glass bowls, one with slightly bent

sides, blue in color, and another, with vertical sides, colorless. To my knowledge, these two pieces, now preserved in the cupboards of the Heritage Department, have never attracted the attention of researchers. One is a bowl 6.5 cm high, with a diameter of 17.5 cm at the mouth, cobalt blue, from Karangnangka, associated with Chinese ceramics of the 8th-9th century ; the other is a goblet made of transparent glass, 11.5 cm high and 11.3 cm in diameter, from the 9th century, from Kaliboto, Purworejo. These two pieces are, for the moment, the oldest evidence of the presence of Middle Eastern glassware in Indonesia.

Slightly posterior are the glass and ceramic fragments of the Persian Gulf found at Barus, on the site of Lobu Tua, dated between the mid-9th and the end of the 11th century (Guillot 1998). Shards of turquoise blue and white staniferous ceramics were discovered, along with some other types. Among them, the 11th century "sgraffitiato tricolores", decorated on the border with pseudo-Arabic inscriptions, constitute the most important group of glazed ceramics of the site. In at least comparable quantities are the fragments of red and white jars from the Siraf ovens. On the same site, finally, more than a thousand pieces of glass were found. The origin of a good part of them has proved, after study, to be Persia and in particular Khorasan in the broad sense (Guillot 1998).

Relatively close to Barus, Padang Lawas is still a mysterious site due to the lack of in-depth studies. One can see on a huge surface in the center of the island, many vestiges of temples, Hindu, at least for some, and especially Buddhist, whose construction seems to have spread between the 10th and 14th centuries (Kempers 1959, 75–77). During works near the 10th century Candi Pamutung, archaeological material similar to that of Lobu Tua was found, including fragments of Middle Eastern glassware.

Further south, the site of Srivijaya in Palembang has been studied archaeologically many times by several teams. The catalogue of the material has not been published yet, but according to archaeologists who participated, Middle Eastern ceramics, especially turquoise glaze and white glaze staniferous of the 9th-10th century, similar to those found on the contemporary sites mentioned above would have been found, as well as lustrous ceramics of the 11th-12th century. Fragments of jars baked in the Siraf ovens, like those found at Barus have also been discovered.

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Very recently, surveys and excavations have allowed to realise that shards of earthenware and glassware from the Near East were found in the archaeological material collected in Leran, East Java, on the site of the ancient city located at the mouth of the longest river in Java, the Bengawan Solo. According to the results of studies, this city would have functioned as a port between the 9th and the 14th century and its peak would have been located between the 9th and the 11th century (Harkantiningsih 2002, 17–26). For the same period, it is mentioned that glass objects from the Near East were found in the cargo of a 10th-century ship that sank near Intan Island while it was presumably be traveling from Palembang, the capital of Srivijaya, to Java (Zuhdi, Utomo, and Widiati 2003, 21). Let's mention, for lack of more precise information, that even further east, in the Philippines, objects made of Middle Eastern glass have also been found (Lamb 1965).

For the 12th and 13th centuries, many shards of Middle Eastern ceramic and glassware were found at the Kota Cina site, on the outskirts of the present-day city of Medan, on the east coast of Sumatra. Unlike Chinese ceramics, this material has unfortunately not yet been fully published. For the same period, some pieces of glassware from the Near East were found in the shipment of a wreck near Pulau Buaya in the Riau Archipelago (Ridho, McKinnon, and Adhyatman 1998).

On the site of Bukit Hasang in Barus, dating from the 13th-14th centuries, surveys have shown that Middle Eastern material was still present in this port exporting camphor. For a more precise origin, it will be necessary to await the forthcoming publication of the excavations which are currently carried out there.

For the period of the 14th and 15th centuries, it is known that the archaeological material of the site of Majapahit includes Persian ceramics. Again, no study has yet been done, so it is still impossible to estimate its importance. Even before the independence of Indonesia, a small window had been reserved for this type of ceramics in what later became the Museum Nasional of Jakarta, where it is still located. Among the pieces exhibited there, mostly fragments of kitchen ware, one can notice a strange floor tile with vertical edges. Let's recall once again that this list, which is already relatively well-stocked, can only grow in the future, now that the attention of researchers is being alerted to this type of imports.

Epigraphic Documents

We are going to turn now to another type of vestige much more eloquent, namely epigraphs. The first dates back to the 10th-11th centuries. It was found on the Lobu Tua site and is the oldest Islamic inscription in Southeast Asia. It is a very short Kufic calligraphy with the words "Allah" and "Muhammad". The text is therefore of no help in determining its origin but, according to a stylistic study, this object comes from Khorasan (Kalus 2000a). The ancient Islamic funerary inscriptions, that is prior to the 18th century, are much more numerous. They are spread very unequally over the Insulindian territory. Most numerous in the west of the archipelago, on the island of Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula, with a very remarkable concentration in the northern part of Sumatra, they appear elsewhere in a few very circumscribed spots, in East Java (Mojopahit and Gresik) in Brunei and in Sulu. The Malay language plays a very small role and the vast majority of them are naturally in Arabic, the language of Islam.

There are hundreds of inscriptions in North Sumatra. Their great number has, in part, discouraged the epigraphists, who have confined their research essentially to the texts of the royal tombs, which permitted the establishment of the genealogy of the sovereigns and the chronology of the ancient kingdoms. It is obvious that a systematic study is needed. The great orientalist Snouck Hurgrogne had felt its necessity as soon as the beginning of the preceding century. It is this task, made even more difficult by the social unrest in the province of North Sumatra, that we started a few years ago hoping to be able to complete this project. Nearly seventy years ago, the epigraphist Cowan caused a sensation by revealing that a Pasai stele carried Sa'dī's verses in their original language (Cowan 1940, 15). Although our study of the inscriptions of North Sumatra is hardly even sketched, we can already affirm that another stele of Pasai of the 15th century is also written in Persian. In the former Acehnese sultanate, more precisely in its capital Banda Aceh, the stele of a revered saint called Sayyid al Mukammil, unfortunately fragmentary, undated but probably of the 16th century, also includes an inscription in Persian. In another funerary complex of the same city, on the site of Tuan di Kandang III, whose tombs date back to the 15th and 16th centuries, we note that the Arabic inscription of an undated stele contains Persian words.

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Still in North Sumatra, but in Barus, the two most remarkable tombs are those attributed to a dynasty founder, as well as that of a very revered saint. The latter is located, as often for such characters, at the top of a hill named Papan Tinggi, which dominates the city. It has two steals. One in Arabic includes the profession of faith and hadiths. The second is inscribed on both sides, with a text in Arabic on one side and in Persian on the other. It is reported that a certain Shaikh Mahmud, whose memory was still alive but whose burial site had been forgotten, communicated it in a dream to a certain Nūjān, who in 1425/6 built on this site the tomb that can still be seen today. The importance given to this saint by the tradition, the exceptional place, above the city, given to his burial and his presence in Barus at a very old date for Indonesia—we can estimate that about a hundred years could have passed between his burial and the erection of the steles, which would put his death at the beginning of the 14th century—suggest that this saint must have been venerated as the main agent of bringing Islam to the city of Barus. The language of the inscription suggests that the deceased was of Persian origin. The very name of the "inventor" of the location of the tomb indicates the same origin.

As for the tomb supposed to be that of the founder of the local dynasty, dated 1370, it carries a short inscription in Arabic denoting a certain Persian influence. If a very limited study has been able to bring out three new steles in Persian and two others in "Persianised" Arabic, there is every reason to believe that others will be discovered in the same region of North Sumatra as the project progresses.

As already pointed out, comprehensive studies of urban sites in the Malay world are sorely lacking, making it difficult to interpret this long list of data, particularly on the important question of whether or not the remains reflect the presence of a Persian community. Nevertheless, we can already draw some conclusions on this subject.

We have seen above that at least such a community existed on the Malay Peninsula during the Sassanid period. For the beginning of the Islamic period, it is certain that Persians were settled in Barus, on the site of Lobu Tua, between the 9th and the turn of the 12th century. The same was certainly true in Kalah, on the Malay Peninsula, which, for the same period, must have corresponded to the southern region of Kedah. We have seen that on the sites of this region, there were many archaeological finds from the Persian Gulf and that the city of Kalah

is repeatedly cited by all Middle Eastern authors. Moreover, Mas'udi reports that it is "today (end of the 10th century) the meeeting place of ships from the Gulf and from China" (Tibbetts 1979, 37), perhaps as a consequence of the massacre of Canton foreign merchants in 879. Even more clearly, a text asserts that a Persian community lived in Kalah, as it portrays this city as inhabited by "Muslims, Hindus, and Persians". The differentiation made by the author between "Muslims" and "Persians" must perhaps be interpreted as a sign that the latter were Zoroastrians or even, as Colless suggests, Nestorians. Ibn al-Faqīh (903) (Tibbetts 1979, 30) indirectly describes the multiethnic society of the ports of the Malay world and in particular Srivijaya, when he notes that there are parrots in Zabaj who speak Arabic, Persian, Greek and Hindi. This anecdote would indicate that Srivijaya also had a Persian community.

The various "Persian" funeral inscriptions show not only that the Iranian community survived in Barus after the sack of Lobu Tua, but also that Persians settled in other centers in North Sumatra, Pasai and Aceh, perhaps as early as the 13th century, but certainly in the 14th and 15th centuries, and that the Persian language was practiced there. In the 15th and 16th centuries, the great mystic poet Hamzah Fansuri, native or resident of Barus (Pansur in local language and Fansur in Arabic or Persian) took care to specify that he wrote in Malay for the "servants of God who know neither Persian nor Arabic", thus suggesting that an elite practiced both of these languages (Drewes and Brakel 1986, 13).

It seems clear that during this period, there was an important Persian diaspora along the sea route: the Persian funerary steles of Pasai and Barus correspond to the tombs of the great port of Quanzhou in Fujian where, again, there were inscriptions in Persian, as well as surnames or *nisba* indicating unequivocally the Persian origin of the deceased (Dasheng and Kalus 1991). Ibn Battūta's testimony for the 14th century is useful in confirming the deductions made from archeology. We know that the Maghribi traveler made a short stop in Pasai in 1349 before going to Quanzhou. It is remarkable to note that besides the Sultan, all the characters he met in this city and mentioned by name are from Persia. Two of the principal officials of the kingdom, the one described as "vice-admiral"—without it being possible to guess to what precise function, *laksamana*, *tumenggung* or *shahbandar*, corresponds this curious title—bears a name, Buhruz, obviously Persian. As for the post of supreme judge, the *cadi*, we are told that he was occupied by a

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sayyid from Shiraz. There was also at the court an emir from Khorasan, precisely from Tūs, as well as an ulema from Isfahan (Battuta 2002, 966). It is interesting to note that all the characters of the Quanzhou Muslim community cited individually by Ibn Battūta are also of Persian origin (Salmon 2004, Note 92). This testimony explains perfectly well that Persian was, alongside Arabic as the language of Islam, a great cultural language throughout the great Asian shipping route.

The same Ibn Battūta reports that he spoke in Persian with the sovereign of Ceylon (Battuta 2002, 943). It is well known that, during one of his expeditions, the Chinese admiral Zheng He, while on this island, left on the southern coast a commemorative stele dated 1409, probably carved in China and containing a text written in Chinese, Tamil and Persian (Paranavitana 1989, 331–41), while a large Chinese cast iron bell, named Cakra Dunia, now kept in Banda Aceh and believed to have been brought from Pasai, bears a Chinese date (winter 1469-1470) as well as a text in Arabic characters, unfortunately today illegible but very likely in Persian.

The Persian presence in the Sultanate of Malacca in the 15th-16th centuries is less obvious. The ancient funerary steles that reached us are limited to those of the sultans. As for literature, which includes many of the oldest texts in the Malay world, such as the *Malay Annals* (*Sejarah Melayu*) or the novel of Hang Tuah (*Hikayat Hang Tuah*), it is almost silent about Persia and the Persians. There are at least two reasons for this silence. If the authors of the first Malay sultanates, whose society was very mixed, praise the "Malayness", they define it on its cultural, not ethnic characteristics. This of course makes it impossible to discern the various components of the population. Moreover, the two above-mentioned works are court works describing the international political environment in which Malacca had to evolve. Their silence on Persia is therefore perfectly explained since in the 15th and 16th centuries, this state did not represent for Malacca a power with which it should have to deal.

The *History of Pasai* (*Hikayat Raja Pasai*) is also silent about the Persians, even though Ibn Battūta's testimony shows that they were influential. This does not imply that, apart from state enterprises, Persians did not play an important role in Malacca. This is suggested by foreign sources. We learn, for example, that it was thanks to Persian merchants that relations between the Ming Dynasty and the Malay

Sultanate were established at the beginning of the 15th century (Gungwu 1964). And at the beginning of the 16th century, Tome Pires repeatedly mentions the presence of Persian merchants in Malacca. He also gives the important information that they do not come directly from Persia anymore but from Cambay in Gujerat (Cortesão 1944, 264; See also Thomaz 2004, 59–158). In short, it seems that during this period, the Persian diaspora was made up of strong personalities, merchants and clerics, who ventured individually all over India and to the Malay world and China and whose individual fate was of little interest to the chroniclers of the Malay courts.

Their cultural impact, however, which was considerable in the formation of the Malay mentality, as we shall see, proves that they enjoyed an intellectual and spiritual prestige, probably out of proportion to the numerical importance of their community.

Language and Literature in the 15th-17th Centuries

It has long been noted that there are a number of Persian loan words in the Malay language. They are certainly not very numerous, since some 300 would have been identified according to the etymological inventory made by Russell Jones (1978; See also Bausani 1964b, 1–32; Beg 1982). But the relative modesty of this number must of course be moderated by the fact that obviously only the terms that do not exist in Arabic are counted as Persian, whereas the Persian vocabulary includes an enormous stock of Arabic words. To this must be added that all the terms relating to the Muslim religion and the new concepts it conveyed were also of Arabic origin.

But it is certainly in the literary field, taken here in the broad sense of the field of writing, that the Persian influence appears as the most visible. This is hardly a surprise, since when the Malay world wanted to join the Muslim cultural ensemble, Persia offered a ready-made set in which religious thought was enriched by multiple contributions from the old pre-Islamic stock drawn from the many cultural sources that this hub-country had adopted during its very long history. As a central country, Persia knew the Mediterranean as well as India and China. As an "imperialist" country, Persia saw continuously on its land foreign peoples who conquered it before the latter were conquered themselves by its culture. As a result, it had more than others the right to claim to have a kind of universal culture "from the East and the West". Its

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diffusion towards the East and in particular towards the Malay world was undoubtedly greatly facilitated by the installation in India in the 16th century of the Moghols, who claimed to be of Persian culture.

Since an exhaustive comparative study of Malay and Persian literatures is out of our reach, we will more modestly limit ourself to a quick synthesis of the conclusions reached by better-armed scholars. We will first examine the few Persian works that have found their way into the Archipelago, then the more numerous ones translated into Malay from Persian and, finally, the Persian themes that inspired Malay authors.

Before reviewing these three groups it should be noted that the Malay manuscript domain still has many grey areas—it is sufficient to note the limited number of text publications—and it is therefore likely that, here again, future studies could bring new elements useful to a better estimate of this literary influence.

Only two manuscripts can be classified in the first group at the present time. According to Voorhoeve (1952, 92) who rediscovered them, the first is a treatise on the grammar of Arabic dated 1582 AD, while the second contains extracts from poems by Jalal al-Din Rūmī (Bausani 1964a, 39–66). Both contain an interlinear translation in Malay, proof of course that they were studied by Malays. The Arabic grammar is interesting for two reasons. On the one hand, it is undoubtedly a manuscript (composition or copy?) written on the spot, since its support is a locally made paper (*dluwang*). On the other hand, it shows that Arabic could be accessed through Persian, which of course proves the importance of this last language in the 16th century in the Archipelago. We shall return later to the influence of Rūmī.

The knowledge of Persian literature and language in certain Insulindian circles is also evident in the Persian quotations which ornement Malay works. This can be seen in the work of Hamzah Fansuri, especially in the *Sharāb al-ʿāshiqīn*, "The drink of the lovers" (Al-Attas 1970, 303, 327), in the *Muntahi*, "The adept" (Al-Attas 1970, 335), as well as in one of his poems where he quotes the poet ʿAttār. It is also found in the works of other authors, such as the *Hikayat Isma Yatim* (Voorhoeve 1952, 92), in the *Sejarah Melayu*, where a verse of Saʿdī's *Būstān* is quoted (Situmorang and Teeuw 1958, 186) or in the *Tāj al-salāṭīn* from the beginning of the 17th century, which quotes many Persian verses, including one borrowed from Attār's *Asrār* (Marrison 1955, 61).

In a second group, Malay works translated from Persian originals can be collected without regard to the fidelity of the transmitters, either strict translators or adaptors. These include some of the oldest works in Malay literature. First of all the *Hikayat Bayan Budiman*, a collection of tales recited by a parrot to his mistress, whose Malay text can perhaps be traced back to the middle of the 14th century and of which Winstedt (1981, 141) sees it as originating in a Persian compilation, as asserted by the Malay text itself. Then there are two well-known texts, the *Hikayat Muhammad Hanafiya* and the *Hikayat Amir Hamza*. We know that these two texts recounting the story of the son of Caliph Ali for the first, and the story of the uncle of the Prophet for the second, have obtained a considerable success throughout the Muslim world and that they were translated into many languages. The two Malay adaptations are thought to have been made in Pasai, perhaps in the second half of the 14th century, directly from Persian versions. It is probably the Malay version which was used as a basis to render the story of Amir Hamza into Javanese (*Menak Amir Hamza*) in East Java in the Pasisir period, in the 16th and 17th centuries (Ronkel 1895). The latter was such a success until the 20th century, that many episodes were added afterwards, creating a "cycle" whose episodes were staged in theater form with a set of wooden puppets (*wayang klitik*). It is undoubtedly also from the Malay that the novel of Muhammad Hanafiya was adapted into Javanese, becoming Ahmad Hanapi in this version (Pigeaud 1967a, 226).

The *Kitab Seribu Masalah*, supposed to relate the questions raised by a literate Jew to the Prophet Muhammad, seems to have been translated from two ancient Persian texts and a version composed around the Caspian. There also exists a Javanese adaptation. This group also includes the *Hikayat Kalila dan Damina*, which was apparently adapted from a 17th century Persian version. No longer in Malay this time but in Javanese, a tale, *Dewi Maléka* (Wieringa 1994, 584), would also have been adapted from the Persian, a case rare enough to be underlined. Finally, the *Tāj al-salāṭīn* presents itself as a kind of compilation of works in Persian, from which the author claims to have found his inspiration (Marrison 1955, 61).

With the third group, one arrives in the more delicate field of influences, when it becomes difficult to determine by what ways a work has been known. We will stick here to the fact that ultimately the

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inspiration comes obviously from a Persian source, and we will limit ourself to examine these influences through a few names and themes, without any claim to completeness.

Sa'dī

As we have seen already, a few verses of the great poet of Shiraz are quoted on a tomb in Pasai dating from the 15th century. Hamzah Fansuri, for his part, quotes several verses of the *Gulistān* (Al-Attas 1970, 288, 336) while the *Sejarah Melayu*, in Abdullah ibn Abdelkadir Munshi's version, quotes a verse from Sa'dī's *Būstān* both in Persian and in Malay translation (Situmorang and Teeuw 1958, 186).

Farīd al-Din 'Aṭṭār

Farīd al-Din 'Aṭṭār, the mystic poet of Nishapur, whom, according to tradition, Jalāl al-Dīn as a child would have met in that city on the road leading him to Turkey, was also known in Insulindia. Hamzah Fansuri quotes his verses several times (Al-Attas 1970, 349, 353). More important perhaps, the same author, of whom only thirty-two poems have come down to us, wrote a significant number of them, about a quarter, with the theme of talking birds. This process is obviously borrowed from the famous *Manṭīq al-ṭayr* ("The Conference of the Birds") (Drewes and Brakel 1986, 38–39). The enigmatic author of the *Tāj al-salāṭīn* also quotes a verse from 'Attār.

Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī and Shams Tabrīz

We have seen above that a manuscript originating from Aceh contains extracts from Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's poems. No doubt then that the great mystic poet of Balkh was known in the Malay world. Another proof of this knowledge is that Hamzah Fansuri, in his *Sharāb al-'āshiqīn*, "The drink of lovers" (Al-Attas 1970, 303–27) as well as in the Muntahī, "The Adept" (Al-Attas 1970, 335), quotes several times, in Persian first and then in Malay translation, passages from his *Dīwān Shams Tabrīz*. In his struggle against the heterodoxy of Hamzah and Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatranī, in the middle of the 17th century, in Aceh, Al-Ranirī well understood the lineage between Hamzah and Rūmī, whose mysticism he discusses. More hypothetically, it is perhaps by reference to Rūmī that one of the rare mystics mentioned in the *Sejarah Melayu*—he gives

his spiritual support to a pretender to the throne—is called Jalal al-Din (Brown 1976, 91).

But more than the "Mawlana", as he was called, it is his master Shams al-Din al-Tabrīzī, or more commonly Shams Tabrīz, who enjoyed a considerable fame in the Archipelago, although as we will see the historical or spiritual purity of the model has not always been respected. It is true that the figure he represents of the spiritual master withdrawn from the world and already in possession of the secrets of the initiates was enough to arouse interest, especially among the Javanese.

In Javanese literature we find several texts difficult to date that relate to this character called Samsu Tabarit (Pigeaud 1968b, 373). In the history of the great Javanese saints related in the great chronicles such as the *Babad Tanah Jawi* (BTJ) or the *Sajarah Banten*, we find recurrently the name of Shams Tabrīz, who plays a determining role in relation with the saints. In the *Sajarah Banten*, it is related how Sunan Kali Jaga, who had led a dissolute life before adopting Islam, after meeting Sunan Bonang went on to complete his teaching at "Pulo Upih" with Shams Tabrīz, who advised him to return to Java. According to this text, Shams Tabrīz was born of an incestuous union between his father and the latter's own daughter. Out of shame he would have traveled the world from the Maldives to Turkey, passing through Pasai, to go to Malacca and finally to Demak. According to some versions of the BTJ, he committed suicide by throwing himself into the sea and would be buried in Demak, where his tomb is said to contain a treasure (Djajadiningrat 1983, 27–29) or to help enrich those who visit it on a pilgrimage. A version of the BTJ tells how a certain K.G. Tedunan, to pay off his debts, spent the night near a tomb on the banks of the Demak River, and how a child appeared to him, who said his name was Shams Tabrīz. In the face of this prodigy, the king of Demak himself settled the debts.

Still in Java, other legends are known. According to a West Java tradition, Shams Tabrīz went to Campa and became the father of Sunan Ampel. According to another, he would have, under the appearance of a child, explained his mystical theories to the sovereign and all his court in the great mosque of Rum (Istanbul). Sunan Gunung Jati would have met him and received from him orders to become sovereign of Sunda (Djajadiningrat 1983, 289–92).

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Beyond these mentions, it is interesting to note the places where, according to the *Sajarah Banten*, Shams Tabrīz traveled in the Indian Ocean and the Archipelago, places that of course he never visited: the Maldives, Pasai, Malacca and Demak. We may wonder whether this is not the road followed by Rūmī's books and teaching.

These legends have several points in common. Shams Tabrīz is portrayed as a great mystic to whom his exceptional "science" gives equally exceptional powers ; it is he who inspires the great saints of Java, such as Ampel, Kalijaga or Gunung Jati. The tales insist on his peregrinations. He is attributed a mysterious death. Hoesein Djajadiningrat points out that in his marvelous appearances he sometimes takes the appearance of an infant (Djajadiningrat 1983, 289), which strongly suggests the genies of wealth, very popular in Java, called *tuyul*. This astonishing Nusantarian appropriation, as well as this strange transformation of the real personage into a manifestation of pure supernatural forces, show at least the fabulous prestige enjoyed by Jalal al-Din's work in the land of Insulindia, even though it was later known by hearsay rather than by reading.

Shāhnāme

In one of the most sophisticated Malay chronicles, the *Sulālat al-salaṭīn*, better known as *Sejarah Melayu*, the earliest version of which dates back to the 17th century, the first two chapters are devoted to the mythical origin of the rulers of Malacca. The text refers to two genealogies. The first concerns the lineage of the Hindu princes of South India, in which the rulers of the Chola dynasty, who at the apex of their political power ruled over the Deccan and Ceylon, and in the first half of 11th century launched a naval expedition against some cities of western Indulindia, are mixed with the dynasty of Vijayanagar, the last Hindu kingdom of India, which collapsed under Muslim attacks in the second half of the 16th century. The text traces this lineage to Iskandar Dhū a1-Qarnayn (Alexander the Great) through his marriage with the daughter of the king of India, here called Kita Hindi, a name in which we recognize the sovereign Kayd of the Islamic versions of Alexander's legend, that is to say the historical Porus, defeated on the banks of the Hydaspe river. The second genealogy concerns the descendants of Alexander in Persia. We recognize in this list of princes the more or less well-transcribed names of Yazdagird, Anūshirvān (Chosroes I), Dārāb

and Dārā (Darius I and III), Bahram-Gūr, Narsah, Pīrūz, Ardashīr Bābakān, Shāpūr, etc. We can see, in short, that what is given here is the list of the Sassanid kings. The origin of this Persian genealogy is not easy to find, as we know that Islamic historiography has incorporated it in its daring attempts to write a universal history, as is the case for example in the *Annals* of Ṭabarī. An important point to be stressed, it seems to us, is the fact that Alexander is no longer the enemy of the Iranians but is assimilated to their culture and better still incorporated in the genealogy of their sovereigns, becoming a son of Darius I. Even more remarkable, the lineage of the Persian rulers mentioned stops with the arrival of Islam. Because of these two striking similarities, it seems possible to affirm that this passage is inspired by the *Book of Kings* (*Shāhnāme*) of Firdawsī, which presents these two same peculiarities. It cannot, of course, be a direct influence since the two texts are of a totally different nature, but the result, by paths that should be studied in greater depth, of a transmission of the Iranian grandeur as conceived and written by Firdawsī. The remoteness of the primary source appears through the poor transmission of writing, as the names, as we have said, are often corrupt to the point of being sometimes unrecognizable, while the scribe who has collated the list, probably from a Persian text, did not master this language and sometimes transformed a term of kinship like *baradar-ash* ('his brother') into part of a name.

It must be added that this Persian genealogy has been adopted still further east in the Malay world, since in the chronicle of the Muslim Chams of Cambodia, the first legendary king of Champa is known as "Nursavan" (Aymonier 1890, 153) which is of course none other than the great Sassanid king Anūshirvān.

Nizāmī

This genealogy of Iskandar as a royal ancestor in the *Sejarah Melayu* leads us naturally to the Malay text called *Hikayat Iskandar Zulkarnain*. This text is among the oldest ones in Malay literature since it is already mentioned in the *Sejarah Melayu* itself (Brown 1976, 2). It is well known that the legend of Alexander, since Pseudo-Callisthenes, has spread throughout the ancient world, but especially in the Middle East. The fact that its hero is mentioned in the Quran has much contributed to its spread in the Muslim world. But it is undeniably in Persia that the theme was most developed, by Ferdowsi at the beginning of the

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11th century, as we have just seen, and especially by Nizāmī in his *Sharafnāme* and *Yiqbālnāme* in the 12th century. It is true that the theme was echoed by other great poets of "Outer Persia" such as Amir Khusro of Dehli and Jāmī of Herat, and we know that the works of the latter were known in the Malay world as they are quoted several times by Hamzah Fansuri. Without being able to indicate to which precise source the author of the Malay *hikayat* refers, there is no doubt that he drew directly or indirectly from the works of the two Persian authors.

The epic of Iskandar spread throughout the archipelago through the Malay language since Iskandar is found as an ancestor of royal lineages in many Malay sultanates, in Malacca of which we have just spoken, but also in Aceh, Banjarmasin and up to Bima (Chambert-Loir 1994b, 18). It also entered Javanese territory where it gave rise to adaptations in Javanese (Pigeaud 1967a). Finally, there is a tomb of Alexander at the foot of Seguntang Hill, the sacred mountain of the old kingdom of Palembang in South Sumatra, where, according to tradition, the descendants of Alexander would have appeared by some marvel in the Malay world and gave birth to the Nusantarian dynasties.

It is still in Nizāmī's works that we should go and look for the source of the romance of Layla and Majnun. We know that it is Nizāmī who gave his letters of nobility to this theme, of Arabic origin, in his *Laylā Majnūn* composed around 1188. Hamzah Fansuri refers to it in a poem (Drewes and Brakel 1986, 128–29). This simple allusion to the characters, without explanation, testifies that, in the far northern part of Sumatra, this story was known not only to the author but also to his listeners and readers.

Siyāsatnāme

The Iranian Sunni Grand Vizier Abu ʿAli Hasan Nizām al-Mulk of Tūs, who served the Seljuk sultans Alparslan and Malikshah in the 11th century, is not unknown in the Malay world, since Marrisson noted that the author of the *Sejarah Melayu*, himself a praise singer of the lineage of the prime ministers of Malacca, wants to enhance the prestige of the latter by comparing them to this famous vizier (Marrison 1955, 52). The reference here is, once again, rather obscure, since Nizām al-Mulk is presented as the king of Pahili (Persia), located in India (Kalinga), and father of the one who will become prime minister in Malacca! (Brown 1976, 50, 88).

We know that it is to this vizier that is attributed the masterpiece of medieval Persian prose, the *Siyāsatnāme*. This type of political books, traditionally called *Furstenspiegel* or "mirror of princes" in European languages, have been a great success throughout the Islamic world, in Arabic as well as in Persian or Turkish. Two works composed in Aceh in the 17th century belong to this genre, totally or partially, the *Tāj al-salāṭīn* by an unknown author by the name of Bukhārī al-Jawharī who quotes the *Siyāsatnāme* as one of the sources he used in the elaboration of his work dated 1603 (Marrison 1955, 55), and the *Bustān al-Salāṭīn* of the Gujarati al-Ranīrī. A comparative study of these works—which it would be urgent to first publish in full—with sources from other countries would be necessary to determine with precision the models followed in the Archipelago. For the second at least, given the origin of Ranīrī (Rander), one would be tempted to seek its origin in the abundant literature of "mirrors" which came into being rather late under the Mughals. The fact that the *Tāj al-salāṭīn* includes the Mogul Humāyūn among the exemplary rulers only reinforces this view. The same literary structure is found, again in Aceh, in the history of the sovereign Iskandar Muda, called *Hikayat Aceh*.

These few examples show what the great genres of Malay "classical" literature, such as the mystical syair, the novels of the Ahl al-Bayt, or the "mirrors of princes", as well as the theme of the universal destiny of man as transmitted by the epic of Iskandar, owe to Persian literature.

From the 17th Century

At the very end of the 16th century, some of the independent Persian merchants can still be seen in the Archipelago. In the story of the first voyage of the Dutch to India (1598), mention is made of Khorasanese (Coraçones) in Banten, who are jewelers in the city. One can even see the portrait of one of them engraved in the text edition (see Fig. 2). Even though they are still present, their number and their role seem to decrease gradually over the years. In the second half of the 17th century, the Dane Cortemünde, a fine observer, in his description of the foreigners of this same city, illustrates the munificence of the great "Moorish" merchants in these terms: "They wear precious clothes, long coats, trousers and on the head a turban adorned with a bird of paradise tail, the two feathers of which are adorned with diamonds; the turban is often invisible as it is covered by so many jewels... We would almost

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believe them to be Persians." But, he adds further, they are actually Rajputs (Cortemunde 1953, 138).

Figure 2. Persian jeweler in Banten, Java, in 1596 (Lodewicksz 1598)

Beaulieu, in the detailed and precise account he gives of the Acehnese society he mixed with during his stay in that city (Beaulieu and Lombard 1996), does not mention a single Persian. They seem to have deserted the Archipelago. Despite this, Persia seems to be the model of a luxurious life and a sophisticated culture. In the 17th century, the king of Banten, in an effort to control the trade and not only the production of his kingdom, created a fleet and we know that he sent several of his ships to Bandar 'Abbas. Court life in this sultanate, as in Aceh, is partly copied on the Persian model. The king's clothes are "Persian", one sits on Persian rugs, and the royal letters are written on paper decorated with beautiful Persian-style illuminations. Beside the Persian horses, which have always been popular throughout the Far East, Banten also curiously imports large-tailed sheep that the palace is proud to possess. They are represented on the "Royal Square" in the relation of the first Dutch journey and we know that the court was still looking for them in the second half of the 17th century. Relations with Persia, however, are not broken in Southeast Asia. For a few decades,

Persians played an important political role in Thailand. Some of them, coming from Golconda, had settled in Siam during the reign of Prasat Thong.

At the death of the latter, they helped the future Phra Narai to ascend the throne in 1657. This support earned them great recognition from the ruler, who awarded them some of the highest positions of his administration. Among them were Phra Klang, a kind of foreign trade minister, Aqa Muhammad, from Astarabad, one of the ministers, ʿAbd al-Razzaq, from Gilan, the governor of the coastal region of Mergui, and the governor of the city of "Paj Puri". At the advent of Narai, there were about thirty Iranians in Siam, apparently having all come individually from India. The beneficiaries of the king's favor invited some of their compatriots to Siam. A few years later, their number rose to a hundred, then Aqā Muḥammad brought two hundred, mostly from Astarābād and Māzandārān. This non-negligible Persian community was headed by a Khorasanese named Khvājā Hasan ʿAli. All seem to have come from the Caspian coast. A Siamese embassy was sent to Isfahan to Shah Sulayman, who replied by sending an embassy to the king of Siam in 1685-1688. The author of the relation of the latter could proudly note that "all the important affairs of the state were in the hands of the Persians".

This "Persian moment" in Siam did not last. We know that at the end of the 1680s, it is the famous Constance Phaulkon who became Narai's favorite and who endeavored, for his part, to obtain the support of the French. The latter thought of converting the king to Catholicism, as the Persians had thought of seeing him becoming Shiʿite, attempts which proved to be as futile one as the other. Let us mention in passing that the capital of Siam Ayyuthaya, founded in the second half of the 14th century, was known in the Malay world under its Persian name of Shahr-i Nov, that we find in several works of Malay literature of the 15th-17th centuries, like the poems of Hamzah Fansuri—this mystic even confides that it was in this city that he had his spiritual "revelation"—, the *Sejarah Melayu* and the *Hikayat Aceh*, a fact that shows by itself the influence of the Persian world on the region at that time. This name is generally interpreted as "new city", yet it should be noted that the ambassador of Shah Sulayman wants to ignore this meaning and gives an entirely different etymology, that of "city of the ships", which would be explained, according to him, by the current means of transport in this capital traversed by canals (O'Kane 1972, 88).

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A word must be said, to conclude this inventory, of the Armenians, whose country of origin adjoins Persia. Most certainly under the influence of this last country, they seem to have participated very early in the great maritime trade with the Orient. Indeed, a Universal Geography written in Armenian dates back to the 9th century and another text, from the beginning of the 12th century, shows that the Armenians were at least interested or even took part in the exchanges between the Persian Gulf and China. The part concerning the Malay Archipelago is the most detailed of all the known works of the time since a dozen toponyms are mentioned for this region (Kévonian 1998).

Tome Pires asserts the presence of Armenians in Malacca at the beginning of the 16th century. It is known that Shah ʿAbbas, the great Safavid ruler, in order to develop his kingdom, made an enormous "transfer" to the interior of his kingdom of Armenian populations living along the Araxe River, in the first years of the 17th century. Among these "displaced" persons were a number of merchants who were settled on the outskirts of the capital Isfahan, in an area called New Julfa, in memory of the city of Julfa they had involuntarily left (Ghougassian 1998). Protected by the sovereign, this community gradually embarked on the Asian trade. Some soon settled in the Mughal empire first, where they quickly understood the interest of the new maritime networks set up by the Europeans (Aghassian and Kévonian 1988, 152–82; Seth 1937). From the 17th century, we see them sailing throughout the Indian Ocean and to China. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, they formed the last representatives in the Malay world of a "Persian" community whose social influence was out of proportion to the very small number of its members. Very attached to their city of origin, they made their compatriots in New Julfa benefit from their financial success. It is thanks to this somewhat marginal link that we can now see a painting by the Javanese painter Raden Saleh in a museum in Isfahan (Kévonian 2001, 91–126).

The loosening of the links between Persia and the Malay world, from the advent of the Safavids, is measured by the little impact that Shiʿism has had on the Archipelago. For a long time, people looked for traces of it and certainly found some clues as the name of the month of Muharram, month of the Kerbala massacre, called Sura (ʿĀshūrāʾ) in Javanese and Usen (Husein) in the language of Aceh, or like the celebration of Tabut, in memory of Hasan and Husein, in the Bengkulu

region (Baried 1978, 65–84). Some others could be added, but these few traditions cannot in any way reflect a significant imprint of Shi'ism on Indonesian Islam.

Conclusion

Having reached the end of this long and yet non-exhaustive review of historical facts and indices of influence, we can try to draw provisional conclusions about the place of Persia in the Malay world and its culture. The first is that since the first half of the first millennium, this power has represented one of the three great cultural centers of the Asian world and it is as such that it took part in the discovery of the maritime regions, and then in the trade with these new countries. It is difficult to see the presence of the Persians in the early days, probably due to their small number. However, we see them forming small communities, as in Kalah and Barus, whatever place in northern Sumatra corresponds with this last toponym at the time. Obliged to go through the Indian subcontinent and more specifically through Ceylon, they certainly first used the existing "Indian" maritime networks. As important and necessary as their place in international trade may have been, it is clear that it is the Indians who played the determining role in the founding of the first historical kingdoms, as shown by the first inscriptions and the first known monuments in Taruma, Kutai, Kedah, Srivijaya or Java.

In short, they took benefit of already established networks. Their small number, as well as the diversity of their religions—Zoroastrianism, Christianity, and perhaps Judaism—caused that they did not leave lasting traces in their host country. One can think that, as in China, where they became sinicized, they adopted in the Malay lands the dominant culture, that is to say Greater Indian, of the ports and cities where they were dwelling, thus losing their own identity. Did they come on their own ships, or on Indian or "Malay" boats, or on board multiple boats taken in relay? We will leave this question here, on which Wolters has made some fascinating hypotheses, merely to point out that over this long period, their knowledge of offshore navigation must have evolved and that their cooperation with Indian shipyards, which was necessary considering the lack of timber in the Persian Gulf, has necessarily strengthened to the point of making the home ports of these ships indistinguishable.

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In a second phase, which probably begins in the 8th century, but which is perfectly discernible in the following century and continues until the end of the 15th century, there is a rapid expansion of maritime traffic between the Persian Gulf and the Malay world. Without doubt, the Persians play the major role, although of course Omani on the other side of the Gulf and later on Arabs of the Red Sea also take part in it. The testimonies they have left show that they were in contact with the majority of the major centers of power or commerce in the Archipelago, with however, as in the previous era, a clear predilection for the ports of the western part of the Archipelago, where they landed more willingly and where some of their compatriots were settled. In view of the importance of the material remains of their presence, such communities can be seen in Takuapa and Laem Pho on the Kra Isthmus for a short time in the 9th century, and more sustainably to the south of Kedah, on the site of the ancient capital of Srivijaya, in Palembang—no data is yet available on the urban site of Melayu, located on the Batang Hari river—, as well as in Barus and probably at the same time in Lamuri—the precise location of which is unknown—or again in Kota Cina. It will be interesting to follow the excavations that will eventually be conducted in Java on ancient sites in order to understand whether they ventured to this political and cultural center of the archipelago. We know too little about this to form a precise opinion. It is unquestionably in the north of Sumatra that their settlement was the densest and the most durable, and it is there that their linguistic and cultural influence left the deepest imprint.

One of the peculiarities of these scattered communities is that they always constitute a minority wherever they are located and seem to be closely related to the Indian and more specifically the Tamil communities, which on the contrary were dominant. This symbiosis observed in the north of Sumatra seems to be merely an extension of the chain of mixed communities established in the ports along the west coast of India and from which will be born those later known under the name of Marrakayar or Mappila, who played a decisive role in the Asian maritime trade from the 12th century until the arrival of Europeans. It is in these northern ports of Sumatra that Islam first imposed itself, a fact that the *Sejarah Melayu* in its legendary history of Islamization, pictorially relates by directing the ship of the Islamizer to Barus, Lamuri, Aru and finally Pasai, all these cities having Muslim communities but only one, Pasai, being ready to make Islam its state religion.

It is certain that foreign Muslim communities did not come exclusively from Persia, but the cultural influence of this country was out of proportion to the numerical importance of the Persian diaspora. The reason lies probably in the quality of the literati who transmitted it. The documented use of the Persian language—let's recall that Hamzah said he was writing in Malay "for those who do not know Arabic or Persian"—as well as other documents cited above, allow to see the importance of these missionaries ready to exile themselves to transmit their knowledge and who certainly played a leading role in the diffusion of ideas and writings. This intellectual effervescence took place when Ilkhanides and Yuan, these distant cousins, seemed to have opened the world and thus allowed everyone to have access to the civilizations they had conquered.

The success of the Persian missionaries in this cultural breakthrough of the Malay world probably owes much also to the qualities of the works they transmitted. The mysticism advocated by their authors was certainly based on a rigorous thought, but this aspect could fade for the Insulindians, less trained in the subtleties of the intellect, before the exposure of human feelings, magnified again in the poetic art. Through Islam so colored, mysticism allowed a synthesis between the various cultures present in Insulindia, sometimes at the risk of twists that mistreated the original orthodoxy. We know, for example, the impact in Insulindia of the current of the *wahdat al-wujūd*, which, even though common to the whole Muslim world has nevertheless been largely developed by the Persian mystics. Transmitted by Hamzah and his Sumatran disciples, it spread throughout the Archipelago and knew, especially in the Javanese world, so brilliant a destiny, albeit in a form often very heterodox, that it appears in a certain way as one of the foundations of the "javanism" of the authors of the 18th and 19th centuries, to say nothing of its more recent resurgences.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, Persian influence continued to be felt through the Gujeratis incorporated into the Mughal Empire, itself strongly Persianized. With its horses, sartorial luxury, refined lifestyle, carpets, ornate letters, etc., Persia continued to fascinate the Malay elites, who endeavored to imitate it. However, the rise of Turkey as an Asian power, the coming to power of the Safavids and their institutionalization of Shi'ism, as well as the upheavals brought in the Asian trade networks by the growing role of the Europeans in the

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Indian Ocean, gradually detached the Malay world from a Persia that was closing on itself. Henceforth orthodoxy was to be sought in the Arab world, and the Hadramis, who came to settle in numbers from the 18th century, could only help supporting this inclination. On the spot a new cultural model was taking shape in an unexpected alliance between the Europeans and the Chinese, who were setttling in the Archipelago in increasing numbers. As a result, the ties forged for more than a thousand years between Persia and the Malay world were frayed.

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Endnotes

- This article was translated from French by Henri Chambert-Loir.

1. For the convenience of the reader, we give all Chinese transcriptions in pinyin. This passage is taken from Liangshu (6th-7th centuries), j. 54, ed. Beijing, Zhonghua Shuju (1973. 787).
2. Borneo does not seem to have exploited camphor before the 10th century (Donkin 1999, 211).
3. See on this subject, pl. 4 & 5 and the corresponding description in C. Salmon (2004).
4. In addition to the very good studies on the wreck itself by Flecker (e.g. 2001, 335–54), we were able to consult only a selection of objects from the cargo. Given that this brief catalog has for main purpose the commercialization of the pieces, only the most beautiful and the most expensive of them are illustrated, which are thus in a very good state of conservation. All seem of Chinese origin, including two glass vials. One may legitimately wonder if other artifacts, certainly less "presentable", were found in the cargo, but which would have made it possible to locate the origin of this ship more precisely.
5. Yet it is on this site that A. Lamb had the merit of studying for the first time in the Malay world the glass found in an excavation. See Lamb's bibliography on this topic in Michel Jacq-Hergoualc'h (1992, 261–66).
6. These two pieces are now kept at the Preservation bureau (Kantor Suaka) in Prambanan, Yogyakarta, Central Java, under inventory numbers 225 and 226.
7. This information was given to us by Mr. Wahyono, former curator at the Museum Nasional in Jakarta, where some fragments are exhibited.
8. On this subject, see Marie-France Dupoizat (2003).
9. Under his leadership, a photographic survey of these tombs was undertaken by the Dutch photographer De Vink in the second decade of the 20th century.
10. This inventory of ancient Islamic inscriptions of the Malay Archipelago has already produced several publications such as Ludvik Kalus (1998, 303–38, 2000a, 23–24, 2003, 63–90) and Claude Guillot and Ludvik Kalus (2002, 7–56, 2003, 25–42, 2004, 17–36, 2000b, 3–24).
11. On inscriptions see Kalus (1998, 303–38).
12. Ibrahim is considered as the founder of the Barus Malay dynasty. He probably lived in the 16th century, two centuries after the date of the tomb. Officially today, his grave would be the one next to the dated stele, but it can be assumed that the first readings of the inscription indicating that the deceased was a woman resulted in a change of identification.
13. This mention found in Abu a1-Fidā is taken over from a 10th-century author quoted by Tibbetts (1957, 22).
14. On this aspect of the Hikayat Hang Tuah see Chambert-Loir (1994a, 41–62). The hero travels to Java, China, the kingdom of Vijayanagar, as well as Turkey, the new major power of the Indian Ocean after its access to the Red Sea.
15. It could be Upeh, the district of Malacca. The context seems to support this hypothesis since Kalijaga, coming from Java, would have gone through Palembang.
16. It should be noted that in the great Maldivian royal chronicle, called Tarīkh, the Islamization of this archipelago in the 12th century is attributed to a shaikh named Yūsūf Shams al-Dīn al-Tabrīzī (Cf. Bell 1940, 18).
17. This chronological and geographical incoherence made me believe and write (Guillot and Kalus 2002), that in the Sajarah Banten this name referred to a shaykh otherwise unknown but namesake of the great mystic master. This error is all the less excusable since, in his commentary, Hoesein Djajadiningrat, editor of the text, clearly showed that

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he was indeed the great mystic master.
18. This information was communicated to me by C. Salmon.
19. EI2, sub Iskandar Nama.
20. For example, al-Attas (1970, 347).
21. The Akhlāq Humāyūn of Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Husayn from 1506-7; Akhbar Ḥakīmī of Hasan ʿAli Munshi, 1579-1580; Akhlāq Djahāngīrī of Qādī Nūrullāh Khāqanī; the Risālah nūrīyah sulṭānīyah of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq Dihlawī; the Mawʿiẓah Jahāngīrī of Muhammad Bāqir Najm Thānī and Tuhfah Qutbshāhī of ʿAli ibn Tayfur Bistami. Six mirrors for the 16th and 17th centuries, including four for the 17th century alone. EI2, p. 989.
22. On one of them, Shaykh Ahmad Qomi, see Sheikh Ahmad Qomi and the History of Siam, Academic Seminar, May 15, 1994, organized by Cultural Center, Islamic Republic of Iran, Bangkok (in Thai & English).
23. This embassy is reported in Safinah Sulaymani, a text translated and edited by John O'Kane (1972). For the Persians in Siam, see J. Aubin (1980, 95–126).

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The journal invites scholars and experts working in all disciplines in the humanities and social sciences pertaining to Islam or Muslim societies. Articles should be original, research-based, unpublished and not under review for possible publication in other journals. All submitted papers are subject to review of the editors, editorial board, and blind reviewers. Submissions that violate our guidelines on formatting or length will be rejected without review.

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2. Booth, Anne. 1988. "Living Standards and the Distribution of Income in Colonial Indonesia: A Review of the Evidence." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 19(2): 310–34.
3. Feener, Michael R., and Mark E. Cammack, eds. 2007. *Islamic Law in Contemporary Indonesia: Ideas and Institutions*. Cambridge: Islamic Legal Studies Program.
4. Wahid, Din. 2014. *Nurturing Salafi Manhaj: A Study of Salafi Pesantrens in Contemporary Indonesia*. PhD dissertation. Utrecht University.
5. Utriza, Ayang. 2008. "Mencari Model Kerukunan Antaragama." *Kompas*. March 19: 59.
6. Ms. *Undhang-Undhang Banten*, L.Or.5598, Leiden University.
7. Interview with K.H. Sahal Mahfudz, Kajen, Pati, June 11th, 2007.

Arabic romanization should be written as follows:

Letters: *'*, *b*, *t*, *th*, *j*, *ḥ*, *kh*, *d*, *dh*, *r*, *z*, *s*, *sh*, *ṣ*, *ḍ*, *ṭ*, *ẓ*, *'*, *gh*, *f*, *q*, *l*, *m*, *n*, *h*, *w*, *y*. Short vowels: *a*, *i*, *u*. long vowels: *ā*, ī, ū. Diphthongs: *aw*, *ay*. *Tā marbūṭā*: *t*. Article: *al-*. For detail information on Arabic Romanization, please refer the transliteration system of the Library of Congress (LC) Guidelines.

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