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SHA'ER BURONG PUNGGOK

Academic Exercise in Fulfilment
of the Requirements of the Honours Degree
in Malay Studies

Edited by

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A515846396

PERPUSTAKAN
JABATAN PENGAJIAN MELAYU

University of Malaya

SINGAPORE

May, 1957

L 6 JUN 1995

A NOTE ON SPELLING

The system of spelling^{followed} in the transliteration of Sha'er Burong Punggok into romanized Malay in this edition is based mainly on Z'ABA's Daftar Ejaan Melayu, with certain modifications which are based on his later work: Petua2 Ejaan Rumi Melayu di-Malaya. Where certain words are not in Z'ABA's 'Daftar', a reference is made to Wilkinson's 'Dictionary'. Where the latter also fails to include these words, an attempt is made to represent them, letter by letter, in the Roman letters. This system of representation of the Jawi spelling is as follows :-

alif	: a	ba	: b	ta	: t
tha	: <u>th</u>	jim	: j	cha	: <u>ch</u>
ha	: h	kha	: <u>kh</u>	dal	: d
dzal	: <u>dh</u>	ra	: r	zai	: z
Sin	: s	Shin	: <u>sh</u>	ṣad	: ṣ
dhad	: ḍ	ṭa	: ṭ	[d]za	: <u>dz</u>
'ain	: '	ghain	: <u>gh</u>	nga	: <u>ng</u>
fa	: f	pa	: p	qaf	: q
kaf	: k	lam	: l	mim	: m
nun	: n	wau	: w	ha	: h
hamzah	: '	ya	: y	nya	: <u>ny</u>

A system of hyphens is used between the letters in the same word: thus 'burong' is spelt b-w-r-ng, and 'sakalian' is written as s-k-l-y-n.

ABBREVIATIONS

Some abbreviations used in this work are :-

- BTVL Bijdragen tot de Taal-, en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indie.
JMBRAS Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society.
JSBRAS Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society.
PSBRAS Publications of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society.
SCHMMHLUB Supplement-Catalogus der Maleische en Minangkabausche Handschriften
in de Leidsche Universiteits-Bibliotheek.

App. Appendix.

v. Verse or Quatrain.

vv. Verses or Quatrains.

Other abbreviations follow standard practices :-

cf. Compare.

ed. Editor or Edition.

f. Following page.

ff. Following pages.

ibid. In the same place.

l. Line.

ll. Lines.

MS. Manuscript.

MSS. Manuscripts.

Op. cit. Work cited.

p. Page.

pp. Pages.

sic. Thus stated in work cited.

vol. Volume.

vols. Volumes.

1 INTRODUCTION

Many folk-tales have been invented in an attempt to explain the various phenomena of the world. The attempt may have been the result of serious meditations over such inexplicable matters as the enmity between the cat and the dog, the origin of the monkey, or the incessant crying of the cicada among the trees of the deep jungle. Or, it may have been merely for amusement or didactic reasons: the stories may be used as a ready and handy answer to such questions as young people are as a rule ever eager to shower upon their elders. Hence the bear is tailless because in a moment of fear, it - once upon a time - dashed frantically away from its companion to whose tail its own tail was tied in a knot. Similarly, the bustard-quail lost its tail and the cow its upper teeth when one day the cow accidentally trod upon the bird's tail, who, in an attempt to free itself, kicked the cow in the mouth, breaking its upper teeth, leaving the latter 'upper-teeth' - less to this day.

All these stories are plausible enough, but their truth is seldom questioned by the young minds which are often content only with the amusement and interest these stories provide. At times even the adults believe or half-believe in the possibility of the events described in the stories in the days gone by. To many people, however, these tales are mere work of the imagination, of value only as a material for amusement in one's pastime and as proverbial ^{allusions} similes which may be used to satirise human behaviour. Many of these tales are beast-fables which portray animals, fish and plants behaving like human beings; they talk, think, enjoy life, suffer misfortunes exactly in the way that human beings do. The only difference is that the circumstances which affect them are

modified to suit their peculiar nature - a man kills using the knife, a tiger using its claws and fangs; a woman grows old and wrinkles, but a flower withers. In themselves these fables are amusing, but of significance is their representation of the human counterparts of the creatures described in them; the behaviour of these creatures are actually an analogy to the behaviour of human beings. Hence the treachery of the snake is actually that of a treacherous person, and the tricks of the mouse-deer are in reality those of a wily trickster who finds little difficulty in getting himself out of any tight corner that he may get into. The story of Punggok - the hawk-owl - in love with Bulan - the moon - has also become an allegoric tale. All the characters in it have their corresponding human replica: the Moon is a lady of high social status; the Stars and the Constellations are her maids; the Eagle is her betrothed, probably fierce and strong; and the Owl is her young lover, probably of a status lower than that of the lady and her betrothed. As in the end of the story the Owl fails to win his lady-love, so in real life he becomes a symbol for the plaintive lover.

Folk-tales may be passed on from generation to generation through written works or by word of mouth. In the process, the tales may be modified in ways that suit the story-tellers with the result that many versions of the same folk-tale are developed. One encounters the same process taking place in the Malay world; a good example is the group of stories centring around the figure of Sang Kanchil - the mouse-deer. Here a variation is seen from the existence of prose collections of the adventures of the mouse-deer as compiled by Skeat and Maxwell¹ and another

1 W.W. Skeat: Fables and Folk-tales from an eastern forest, Cambridge, 1901.
G. Maxwell: In Malay Forests, "A Tale by the wayside", Edinburgh, 1911.

collection in sha'er entitled Sha'er Si-Kanchil (or Sha'er Pelandok Jēnaka)¹. In the same way, the love-story between the Owl and the Moon mentioned above has come to have a variety of versions. A prose^{version} of it is summarised by Skeat :-

"Once upon a time the Owl (Punggok) fell in love with the Princess of the Moon (Pūtri Bulan) and asked her to marry him. She promised to do so, if he would allow her to finish her quid of betel undisturbed; but before finishing it she threw it down to the earth, where it took the form of the small bird in question [burong sēpah putēri]. The Princess then requested the Owl to make search for it, but as, of course, he was unable to find it, the proposed match fell through. This is the reason why the Owl ... 'sighs longingly to the Moon'"².

The sha'er version of the story, however, is very different from Skeat's prose version. As against the apparent pleasure of the Moon in giving the Owl a task to accomplish before he can marry her (Skeat's version) Sha'er Burong Punggok portrays her as being sincerely in love with him, both of them fearing that their secret love affair might be discovered by her betrothed, Gēroda - the Eagle.

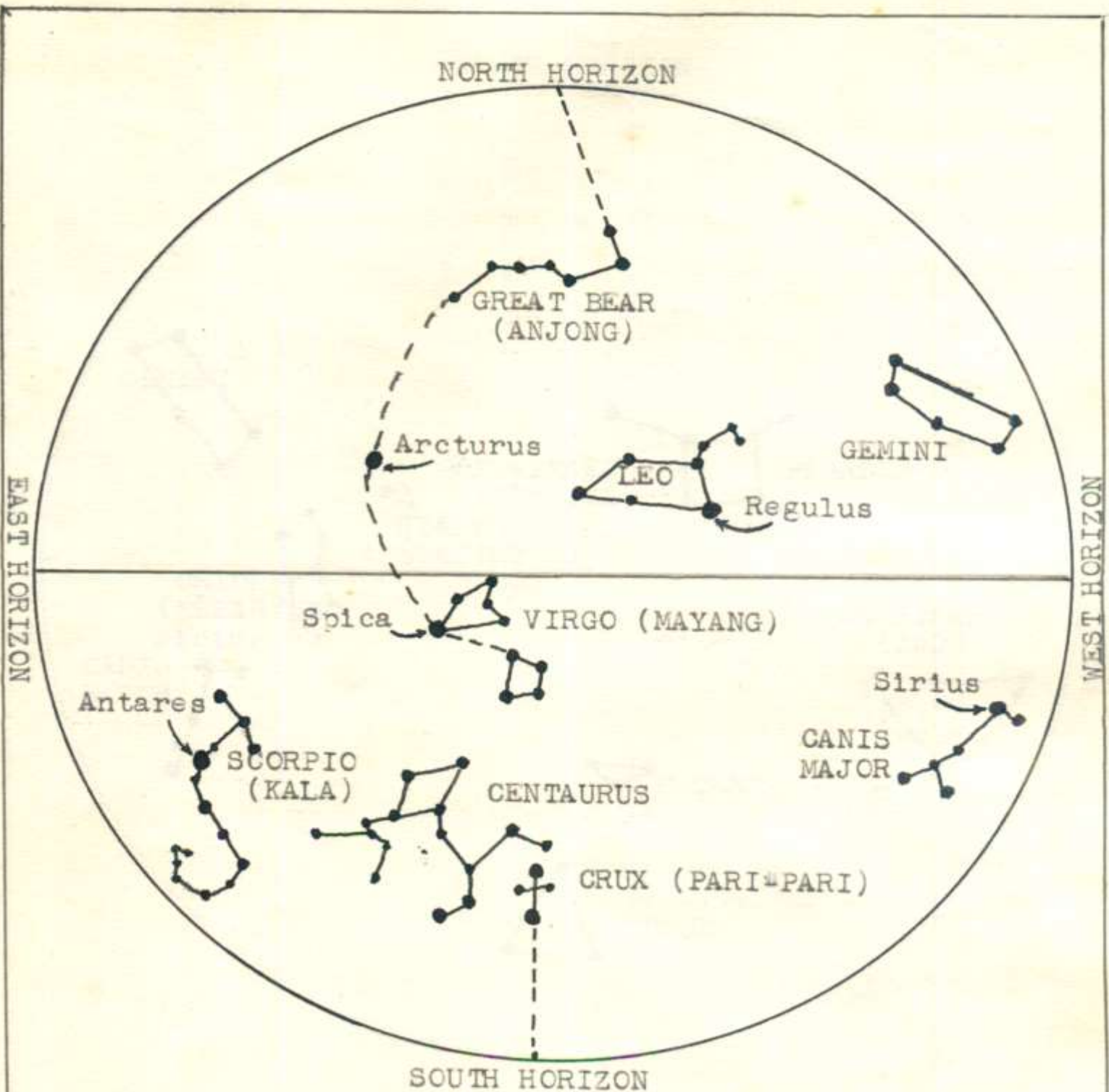
Which of the two versions is the popular one, it is difficult to say. The sha'er version has undoubtedly been popular, judging only from the number of ^{varying & differing} MSS. that still exist³ and the number of times it was lithographed and re-lithographed⁴. On the other hand, it is the theme of Skeat's version that seems to be in the minds of the Malays whenever

1 Sha'er Si-Kanchil (or Sha'er Pelandok Jēnaka), al-Haji Muhammad Amin, Singapore, 1333 A.H. [i.e. 1915]

2 W.W. Skeat: Malay Magic, London, 1900, p. 122.

3 See Ch. 4.

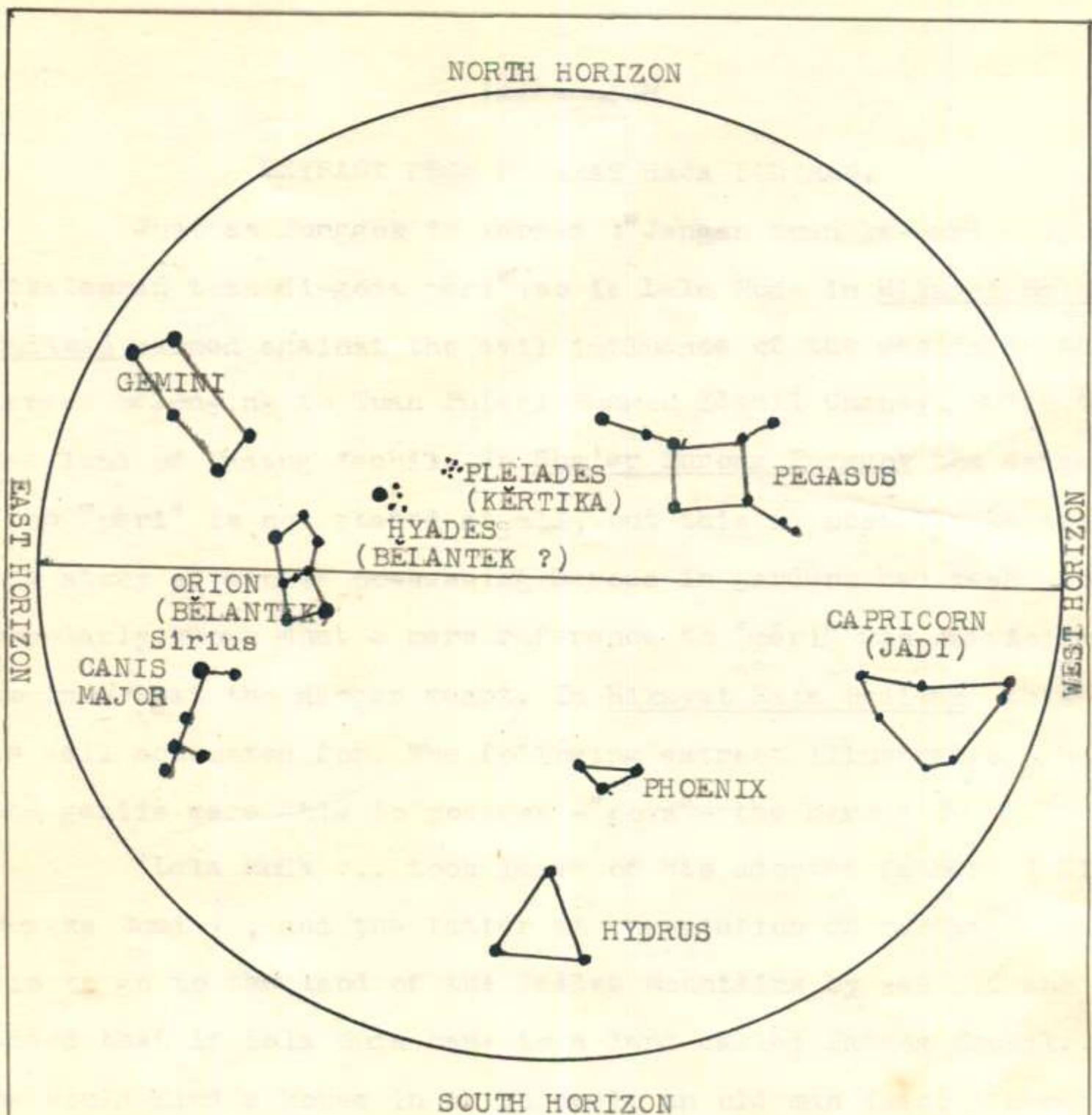
4 Overbeck mentions of the earliest known printed copy published in Padang in 1301 A.H. (i.e. 1884 according to Dja Silaija's Takwim Renekas, and not 1881 as noted by Overbeck.) He also mentions of a Singapore publication in 1910 (JSBRAS, 67, 1914, p.194). A later Singapore edition was printed in 1912; see description of C, p.30.



SOME STARS AND CONSTELLATIONS (I)

(As Seen from Singapore in May)

Names with Malay Equivalents.



SOME STARS AND CONSTELLATIONS (II)

(As Seen from Singapore in December)

Names with Malay Equivalents.