

ROMANTICISM AND COLONIAL IDEOLOGY IN THOMAS STAMFORD RAFFLES'S PRODUCTION OF THE *HIKAYAT DAMAR BULAN* MANUSCRIPT

(Ideologi Romantis dan Kolonial Thomas Stamford Raffles dalam Penghasilan Manuskrip Hikayat Damar Bulan)

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Abstract

This study aims to uncover the romantic-colonial ideology of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, who acted as a patron in the production of the *Hikayat Damar Bulan* manuscript (RAS 11). Employing narrative analysis, the study examines the portrayal of Damarwulan in the text, followed by a discursive analysis within a codicological framework (including the manuscript's date, origin, scribe, and patron) and considers the historical context of British colonialism in Java. The findings reveal that the *Hikayat Damar Bulan* was completed in 1815 under the direction of Raffles. The manuscript was copied from the *Serat Damarwulan* and the *wayang krucil* performances, which were popular along the northern coast of Central Java. In the tale, Damarwulan is depicted as a hero who maintains and protects the integrity of Majapahit from the threat of Menak Jingga, a narrative positioning symbolising the ideal order. This position suggests that the manuscript contains a romanticised portrayal of an ideal order rooted in the Hindu-Buddhist era of Majapahit, rather than the Islamic forces of 19th-century Java, which Raffles perceived

as sources of disorder and threats to colonial rule. The manuscript serves as material evidence of Raffles' romanticism—his desire for a harmonious order in which colonial power could be institutionalised and exercised without resistance. Thus, this study concludes that *Hikayat Damar Bulan* is a romantic manuscript, produced with and for the purpose of articulating Raffles' romantic ideology, an ideology that was discursively shaped within the context of colonialism and among 19th-century colonial scholars.

Keywords: *Hikayat Damar Bulan*, colonialism, Hindu-Buddhist, Malay manuscript, production of manuscript, romanticism

Abstrak

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap ideologi romantisme-kolonial Thomas Stamford Raffles yang bertindak sebagai pelindung dalam penghasilan manuskrip Hikayat Damar Bulan (RAS 11). Kajian ini menggunakan analisis naratif untuk meneliti pemaparan Damarwulan dalam teks tersebut, diikuti dengan analisis diskursif dalam rangka kerja kodikologi (sejarah pengumpulan manuskrip: tahun, asal-usul, penulis, dan penaung), serta konteks sejarah penjajahan British di Jawa. Kajian mendapati bahawa Hikayat Damar Bulan disiapkan pada tahun 1815 di bawah kehendak dan arahan Raffles. Manuskrip ini disalin daripada Serat Damarwulan dan persembahan wayang krucil yang popular di sepanjang pantai utara Jawa Tengah. Dalam cerita ini, Damarwulan digambarkan sebagai seorang wira yang mengekalkan dan melindungi integriti Majapahit daripada ancaman Menak Jingga, satu kedudukan naratif yang melambangkan susunan ideal. Kedudukan ini menunjukkan bahawa manuskrip tersebut mengandungi penggambaran romantik tentang susunan ideal semasa era Hindu-Buddha Majapahit, berbanding dengan kuasa Islam pada abad ke-19 di Jawa yang dianggap Raffles sebagai sumber kemusnahan kerana mengancam susunan kolonial. Manuskrip ini berfungsi sebagai bukti material romantisme Raffles, yang menginginkan susunan harmoni. Dengan susunan ini, kuasa kolonial dapat diinstitusikan dan berfungsi tanpa tentangan. Oleh itu, kajian ini menekankan bahawa Hikayat Damar Bulan dihasilkan dengan didorong oleh romantisme yang terikat rapat dengan kehendak dan kepentingan ekonomi kolonialisme, yang dikenali sebagai romantik-kolonialisme di Jawa abad ke-19. Oleh itu, kajian ini merumuskan bahawa Hikayat Damar Bulan merupakan sebuah naskhah romantik

yang dihasilkan bagi mengartikulasikan ideologi romantisme Raffles, iaitu suatu ideologi yang berkembang secara diskursif dalam kalangan sarjana kolonial pada abad ke-19.

Kata Kunci: Hikayat Damar Bulan, kolonialisme, Hindu-Buddha, manuskrip Melayu, penghasilan manuskrip, romantisme

INTRODUCTION

Majapahit was the last Hindu-Buddhist kingdom in Java before power shifted to the Islamic sultanates in Central Java (Kieven, 2017:3). Margana (2021:175) identifies Majapahit as the most influential kingdom in the maritime world of Southeast Asia. However, throughout its development, this kingdom was not free from political intrigue and the violence of war, both of which formed part of its succession struggles and contests for power. During its historical trajectory, between 1401 and 1406, the Paregreg War took place, involving Wikramawarddhana and Wirabhumi, which subsequently diminished Majapahit's reputation in the eyes of other regions in the Archipelago (Munandar, 2021:109). Furthermore, Munandar (2021:114) states that, although Majapahit was relatively peaceful and free from civil war during the reign of Suhita, the daughter of Wikramawarddhana, its reputation continued to deteriorate. The Paregreg War later inspired the emergence of the renowned Javanese tale, Damarwulan (Soenarto Timoer, 1984:38), a story that continued to evolve and remained well-known even after the fall of Majapahit and the political transition to Islamic rule in Java.

The Damarwulan narrative enabled the preservation and dissemination of Majapahit's grandeur, allowing for its imagination to be perpetuated despite the historical decline. Generally, the tale recounts the challenges faced by Ratu Kencana Wungu of Majapahit when Menak Jingga of Blambangan sought her hand in marriage. The Queen posed a challenge, declaring that any man who could defeat Menak Jingga would earn the right to marry her. Damarwulan emerged as the hero who triumphed over Menak Jingga. This tale serves as a counter-narrative to the Majapahit's historical decline, instead highlighting the splendour of Majapahit through the defeat of Menak Jingga. Such a tale implies that the glory of Majapahit, a defining period in Javanese history, was preserved and reproduced through the literary tradition across generations.

Ras (2014:254-255) describes the Damarwulan tale as a pseudo-historical narrative set during the Majapahit era, in which Dewi Suhita is identified in the story as Prabu Kenya. Ras (2014:255) further suggests that the story originated and developed in Java, specifically in the inland areas south of the eastern coastal region—territories that belonged to the Surabaya domain in the late 16th century. In other words, this romance is believed to have originated in what is now East Java. By the 17th century, the Damarwulan romance had spread to Central Java and was later read in West Java. These stories also circulated among regencies along Java's northern coast, where the earliest puppet performances became popular, as noted by Pigeaud (1967:232). As such, the *Serat Damarwulan* exists in Javanese tradition (British Library collection, MSS Jav. 89), believed to have been produced in the latter half of the 18th century and originated from the northern coast of Java (Gallop, 1995:59). This estimation aligns with Pigeaud's view that the tale entered the written tradition around the same time it became integrated into puppet theatre repertoires. Consequently, Damarwulan became widely known through both oral and written traditions.

Bachtum's study (1981:12) maps several Malay manuscripts containing the Damarwulan story at the Jakarta Central Museum (prior to the transfer of the collection to the National Library of Indonesia), namely ML 190 and ML 721, both titled *Sa'ir Damar Wulan*. The study also identifies another version of the manuscript in the Royal Asiatic Society's collection, titled *Hikayat Damar Bulan*, collection number RAS Raffles Malay 11. Ricklefs et al. (2014:134) describe the *Hikayat Damar Bulan* as measuring 32.5 x 20 cm and written on Chinese paper, which appears to be a whitish shade. Digital examination shows that each page is divided into two sections by a vertical line down the centre; text is written only on the left side, while the right side remains blank. This empty space may have been intended for translation purposes (Ricklefs et al., 2014:134). The text is neatly inscribed, with clear and legible handwriting. The manuscript comprises 151 pages, with page numbers located at the upper right corner of odd-numbered pages and the upper left corner of even-numbered pages. The manuscript is neither illustrated nor illuminated. It is bound in marbled paper resembling natural stone, with a dark red cover.

LITERATURE REVIEW

To date, several studies have examined the *Damarwulan* story within the Malay tradition, using either the same or different corpora. One such study

is by Bachtum (1981), who presents an edited version of *Syair Damar Wulan* (ML 190), a manuscript from the National Library of Indonesia. This edition is accompanied by a semantic analysis aimed at uncovering the values embedded within the narrative. The study reveals life lessons derived from the experiences of the characters, such as Damar Wulan, Layang Setra, Layang Kumitir, Menak Jingga and Logender. Bachtum also provides a deeper examination of Damar Wulan's positionality as a man with distinct charm, highlighting the erotic aspects associated with his character. In contrast, Susanto (2007) examines *Syair Damar Wulan* ML 176 from a gender perspective, focusing on the subordinate position of women under male authority, specifically in the relationship between Ratu Kencana Wungu and Damarwulan. This study employs both structural analysis and gender theory to uncover the implications of the gendered relation within the narrative. Another study using the same corpus is by Nugraha (2021), who presents an edited version of the text followed by an analysis of its aesthetic qualities. Nugraha focuses on both the internal and external beauty of the narrative, arguing that beauty in the narrative serves simultaneously as a source of entertainment and as moral instruction for readers.

Although these studies draw on different corpora, they share a common approach within structuralism, focusing on the meaning and aesthetics of the text without placing that meaning within the contexts that produced it, except for Susanto's study, which situates the text within the broader Javanese cultural field. Nevertheless, all three studies tend to treat the text in isolation. In contrast, this study adopts a post-structural approach, shifting from text to context, whereby the text is not viewed as an independent entity but rather as interconnected with the world beyond itself. This approach enables the study to address a question that has not been explored in previous discussions of Damarwulan within the Malay tradition: Why was this story written in the form of a *hikayat*, and how does the discursive power that enabled its reception and rewriting operate within this specific convention of *hikayat* writing? This discussion is significant, as a *hikayat*, like other literary works, does not emerge from a vacuum; it is shaped by a variety of contexts—power, interests, and desires, among others—that necessitate its creation. Consequently, understanding the *hikayat* as a cultural product is crucial and warrants further investigation.

The previous discussion has shown that *Hikayat Damar Bulan* is fundamentally connected to the Javanese romance set during the Majapahit era and to the Majapahit Kingdom itself. Institutionally, however, the manuscript forms part of the collection of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles

(1781-1826). It is, therefore, important to question Raffles' relationship with this manuscript and to ask why a Malay manuscript contains a story set in Majapahit. The formulation implies that Raffles' collection of the manuscript was likely driven by certain ideological interests, which can be uncovered through an analysis of the narrative contained within it. Accordingly, the research questions are framed as follows: (1) How is Damarwulan portrayed narratively in the *hikayat*? (2) What are the ideological implications of this portrayal in relation to Raffles' interests? Through these two questions, the study aims to uncover the ideological motives, particularly within the context of colonialism, that surrounded and influenced the production of this Malay manuscript. The discussion of manuscript production thus facilitates a broader understanding of the manuscript's historical and ideological context.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a post-structuralist approach, particularly in relation to the concept of discursive practice. This concept implies that discourse is linked to language or social practice that refers to the production of knowledge through language, which imparts meaning to a material object (Barker, 2004:21). Foucault (in Barker, 2004:83) explains that discursive practice elucidates how the operation of power governs the formation of discourse. Post-structuralism can serve as a tool for evaluating literary works, in this case, *hikayat*, not only in terms of its structure but also in terms of the ideological interests conveyed by the author within specific social, cultural, and political contexts. Lyotard (1984:81) argues that a text cannot be evaluated solely according to pre-existing rules but should be assessed based on the author's intentions and objectives. Post-structuralism is not anti-structure; rather, structure remains essential in literary works as it is crucial for understanding the semantic framework of the text. However, analysis cannot be confined solely to its structural aspects. Instead, it must expand to include a discursive critique that uncovers the social, cultural, and political realities reflected or homologised by the text. The author is also considered in this approach, as Lyotard (1984:34) suggests that the author is a meta-subject who constructs a unique discourse through their work.

The post-structuralist approach aligns with the focus of this study, which uses the manuscript as its corpus. The manuscript itself is a material object produced as a form of knowledge, and within it, the text conveys a specific discourse. This material object and its corresponding discourse are not produced in isolation or without specific causes but are generated by the

power structures that necessitate them. Thus, this approach is suitable for uncovering the ideological aspects surrounding the production of both the text and the manuscript. However, this approach must also be adapted to the specific nature of the research corpus. Lyotard's notion of the author as a meta-subject, for example, must be adjusted in the context of philological studies, where the author's identity is often unknown, and the only information available is about the scribe rather than the original author. This peculiarity must be acknowledged through a detailed and careful analysis.

Theoretically, this study also presents a discussion on romanticism. The term has numerous definitions, many of which cannot be fully understood without considering its developmental origins in Europe. Wellek (1949:172) asserts that romanticism is a European movement that can be applied to comprehensively understand the literary process, including the rise and fall as well as the dominance of norms or conventions. This definition is formulated after Wellek synthesised the ideas of various European thinkers. However, Wellek (1949:171) does not dismiss the differences and variations among these ideas. One such perspective originates from Shelley, who stated that poetry is the expression of imagination, and that the poet employs imagination as an instrument of knowledge about reality (in Wellek, 1949:160). This view implies a tension between imagination and reality, between the real world and the ideal world. Within this tension, the ideal world appears to be superior, as it is through this realm that the real world is defined, known, and perceived. This aligns with Pérez's interpretation (2015:12), based on Wordsworth's thought, that romanticism—drawing upon the philosophies of Plato and Kant—regards the real world (the world we see and experience) as inferior. In contrast, the ideal world embodies meaning, beauty, and truth. Furthermore, according to Faruk (2016:43), although humans cannot directly experience the ideal world, it is considered more significant than the real world.

In this study, the concept of romanticism is not applied to identify or elaborate on the representation of the ideal and real worlds in *Hikayat Damar Bulan*, but rather to examine how romanticism functions as an ideology that drives the production of the manuscript. As a result, *Hikayat Damar Bulan* is understood as a romantic manuscript. The definition of "romantic" in this context follows Miles (2001:191), who describes the romantic novel as an aesthetic space with a historical mission to establish romanticism as an ideology. Romanticism itself is linked to the production of Malay manuscripts and Javanese tales through colonialism in Java. During the colonial era, there was a particular interest in local culture, nature, and archaeological remains

(see Moriyama, 1996; Boomgaard, 2006; Bloembergen & Eickhoff, 2013). Therefore, this study demonstrates that the production of Malay manuscripts as romantic texts cannot be separated from the romanticism that circulated among 19th-century colonial scholars, including Raffles himself.

The choice of the theory has methodological implications, which broadly involve a shift from narrative (textual) analysis to codicological (contextual, concerning the production and history of the manuscript) analysis, and vice versa. This movement necessitates the use of dialectical analysis techniques. Faruk (2020:166-167) suggests that such analysis regards literary works, with their structures, as part of a larger whole—namely, the social environment. Accordingly, this study begins with a codicological discussion. Codicology, according to Fathurahman (2016:117), may be understood as the history of culture, as it enables researchers to uncover the origins and development of manuscript culture at a particular time through this approach.

This study outlines the codicological aspects of the manuscript, focusing on its historical context and the history of its collection. This discussion, in turn, provides a foundation for deconstructing the main narrative of *Hikayat Damar Bulan*. Narrative analysis will be conducted through close reading of the *hikayat*, with textual quotations used to substantiate the analysis and arguments presented in this research. This analysis will be further reinforced by the deconstruction of ideology and the uncovering of colonial history in relation to that ideology. The analytical steps in this analysis are coherently interconnected, demonstrating that the narrative within *Hikayat Damar Bulan* is inseparable from certain interests and ideologies, which are shaped by codicological aspects and supported by the colonial historical context in which the manuscript was produced. In other words, while this study is fundamentally grounded in the *hikayat* text as its main corpus and primary source of data, the analysis also incorporates insights from previous studies, particularly those concerning romanticism within the context of 19th-century colonialism in Java.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The History of the Collection as a Codicological Aspect of the *Hikayat Damar Bulan*

This analysis reveals two key narratives that require close attention and discussion: the origin of the story as presented on the first page of the

manuscript, and the time and purpose of its writing as outlined on the final page. These two aspects are crucial for understanding both the creation of the manuscript and its ideological context. The following are the first and second excerpts for examination (Hikayat Damar Bulan, 1815):

Bahwa ini pada menyatakan, ada konon suatu ceritera yang dikarang oleh segala dalang, maka dijadikan wayang krucil atau wayang klitik serta disurat di dalam segala kitab yang terbit dari tanah Jawa (p. 1)

[It is stated herein that there is a tale composed by all puppeteers, which was adapted into *wayang krucil* or *wayang klitik*, and written in all manuscripts originating from the land of Java.]

Adapun yang berkehendak ceritera ini Paduka Lutnan Gapernor T[h]omas [S]tanfort Raff[f]les tatkala berangkat ke Banyumas, lalu ke tanah Jawa yang sebelah wetan dan yang memberi tanda ialah yang mengarang ceriteranya Damarwulan dan sudahnya kepada 23 hari (hari) bulan Juli tahun 1815. (p. 151)

[As for the one who desired this tale, it was His Excellency Lieutenant Governor Thomas Stamford Raffles, during his journey to Banyumas and subsequently to the eastern part of Java. The one who marked it was the scribe of the *Damarwulan* tale, and it was completed on the 23rd day of the month of July, in the year 1815.]

The narrator's statement in the first excerpt suggests that the Damarwulan story in this *hikayat* was transcribed from an already established narrative that had circulated in Javanese manuscripts and *wayang krucil* performances. This implies that, prior to the production of this Malay manuscript, the Damarwulan story had already been recorded, including the *Serat Damarwulan*, which had existed since the 18th century. Furthermore, *wayang krucil*—featuring small, flat wooden—was once popular in the northern Java region, between Surabaya and Semarang, where the Damarwulan story was performed (Ras, 2014:254; Andrieu, 2017:484). Gallop's hypothesis regarding the origin of the *Serat Damarwulan* further supports the idea that the tale was widely known along the coastal areas.

In line with this, it is highly likely that *Hikayat Damar Bulan* originated from the northern coastal region. This is reinforced by the second excerpt, which provides the scribe's notes (though the scribe remains anonymous) that the *hikayat* was written at the request and instruction of Raffles.

The scribe uses the Gregorian calendar to note the *date of completion*—23 July 1815—placing the production in the first half of the 19th century. This suggests that Raffles, then Lieutenant Governor of Java, played a dual role, acting not only as a political figure but also as a patron of Malay manuscript production.

This study posits two forms of patron-client relationships in manuscript production: direct and indirect. A direct relationship occurs when the patron engages personally with the author or scribe. In such a case, the author or scribe works directly under the patron's command. In contrast, an indirect relationship is mediated by a third party that acts as an intermediary between the patron and the client. As Proudfoot (2003:3) explains, during the 19th century, many European collectors had relationships with local collaborators or partners in the manuscript trade.

In the context of *Hikayat Damar Bulan*, this study argues that Raffles did not establish a direct relationship with the scribe but rather this was mediated by a local partner. This argument is based on the absence of the scribe's name and supported by the timing of the manuscripts' production. According to the scribe, the manuscript was completed in 1815, when Raffles was preparing to travel to Banyumas and the eastern part of Java. Carey (2017:55) confirms that in mid-1815, Raffles travelled to eastern Java to settle land lease matters. This aligns with the scribe's account in the text, suggesting that Raffles was not only attending to economic and administrative matters but also paid attention to local material culture. This is consistent with a view by Proudfoot (2003:20) that Raffles was an active collector of Malay manuscripts in Malacca and several parts of Java. Based on the scribe's information, Raffles seemingly made a brief stop in the region where the scribe resided while on his journey to the interior of Java, namely Banyumas. The brevity of this stop further supports the notion that Raffles may not have had direct contact with the scribe, given time constraints.

A further important codicological aspect involves identifying Raffles' local partner at the time. Gallop (2015) states that Raffles was often assisted by local aristocrats, such as Kiai Adipati Sura Adimanggala (the Regent of Semarang) and Panembahan Nata Kusuma of Sumenep. This paper proposes that the Regent of Semarang was likely involved in the acquisition of *Hikayat Damar Bulan*. As Solomon (1994:91) describes, this regent was a collector of Javanese and Malay manuscripts for Raffles and translated several *babad* texts for him. Regarding the manuscript's points of acquisition, this study suggests that it was most likely obtained from the northern coastal region of Java, specifically Semarang, for two reasons. First, Semarang was a key

centre for *wayang krucil* development (Ras, 2014:254). Second, Semarang was a prominent centre for the writing of Malay texts in the 18th and 19th centuries (Gallop, 2013).

Based on the explanations above, it can be concluded that *Hikayat Damar Bulan* contains limited paratextual (codicological) information. As such, speculation is necessary when identifying the local partner involved and the manuscript's place of origin, using historical context as the interpretive basis. According to Hijjas (2023:44), colonial collectors often ignored the origins of manuscripts, resulting in their detachment from the social and historical contexts that once contextualised them. This is evident in the lack of paratextual information in many colonial-era manuscripts. Borrowing Hijjas' terminology, *Hikayat Damar Bulan* is a manuscript that exists in the collection without any depiction of its historical and social context. However, one crucial piece of information is that Raffles was the intended recipient of the manuscript's production.

This study argues that, although the scribe's identity remains unknown, the relationship between the colonial collector and the (indigenous) scribe cannot be conclusively determined. Raffles' reasons for acquiring this manuscript can be inferred from the narrative of the text. This study argues that the manuscript features a narrative closely tied to Hindu-Buddhist elements, set in the Majapahit Kingdom. This aligns with Raffles' romanticised perception of Java's idealised grandeur and its Hindu past (Aljunied, 2005:7—8; Perkasa, 2021:44). His effort to gather knowledge about the Javanese colony was inseparable from the colonial construction of knowledge, whereby the accumulation of knowledge served as a form of power and control.

The following section will explore the Hindu narrative in the Damarwulan story, followed by the second section that examines how this narrative reflects romanticism. Finally, a third section will contextualise this romanticism within Raffles' colonial era in Java.

The Hindu-Buddhist Narrative in *Hikayat Damar Bulan*

The 19th century marked a significant period in the study of Malay philology. During this time, Malay manuscripts were produced not only in the central regions of the Malay world, such as Riau, but also in other areas. The geographical diversity of manuscript production had an impact on the narratives of Malay stories. Iskandar (1996:xviii) states that classical Malay *hikayat* often reflected Middle Eastern influences, as the young rulers of Riau were particularly fascinated by stories originating from outside the region.

However, this trend shifted in the 19th century, as Malay narratives no longer entirely adhered to Middle Eastern traditions but, instead, incorporated Javanese romances into the literary repertoire of Malay literature, including stories such as Damarwulan.

Malay literature was not dominated by Islamic-inspired works; texts containing Hindu narratives continued to persist despite the growing influence of Islamisation (Ricklefs, 2001:61). Even into the 19th century, many Malay *hikayat* were inspired by Hindu epics such as the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. *Hikayat Damar Bulan* forms part of this literary heritage, shaped by Hindu influence. This is evident from the very beginning of the narrative, which notably omits the customary praises to Allah found in other *hikayat*. The narrator, as shown in the initial excerpt above, explains that the story originates from a *wayang krucil* performance. *Wayang*, with one of its stories stemming from pre-Islamic heroic legends, such as Panji and Damarwulan, served as a medium through which the Hindu-Buddhist heritage was preserved in an increasingly Islamised Java (Ricklefs, 2001:63).

In *Hikayat Damar Bulan*, Hindu elements are clearly maintained, with no integration of Islamic elements. This is understandable, given the narrative setting—Majapahit—under the reign of Dewi Kencana Wungu. Historically, Majapahit was the largest and final Hindu-Buddhist kingdom in the archipelago before the rise of Islam. During this period, Hindu-Buddhist practices were deeply embedded in Javanese life (Munandar, 2020:20). This indicates that, during the Majapahit era, Hindu-Buddhist practices were practically woven into the social fabric of society. This is similarly reflected in the narrative of *Hikayat Damar Bulan*. The text recounts how Kencana Wungu, also known as Prabu Rara, is troubled by the actions of Menak Jingga, whom she perceives as a threat to Majapahit's stability. In response, she performs a ritual to pray to *Dewata Mulia Raya* for help, as demonstrated in the following excerpt (*Hikayat Damar Bulan*, 1815:75):

Setelah sudah, maka sang Prabu pun keluar dari istana, pergi ke tempat pemujaan. Setelah sampai ke situ, lalu membakar setinggi dan kemenyan, lalu memuja seraya memohon kepada Dewata Mulia Raya, moga-moga ada orang yang bercakap membunuh Menak Jingga itu

[Thereafter, the Queen departs from the palace, proceeding to the place of worship. Upon her arrival, she burns incense and frankincense, then adores and prays to the *Dewata Mulia Raya*, that perhaps there is someone who can kill Menak Jingga.]

This depiction of ritual worship by Prabu Rara illustrates the continued presence of Hindu-Buddhist elements in the story. As Kieven (2013:75, 112) notes, the place of worship (*pemujaan*) forms an integral component of the temple and part of the *mandala*. Another important aspect is the element of worship, such as incense and frankincense, which are burned to produce a fragrance. These two elements serve as mediums for connecting with God, enabling Prabu Rara to seek divine help in bringing forth someone capable of eliminating the threat to herself and her kingdom, namely Menak Jingga. This motif, in which a queen invokes divine aid to safeguard her realm, bears similarities to a motif found in *Dhāraṇī* literature. Hidas (2020:235, 240) states that in the *Bhaiṣajyagurusūtra*, disruptions to royal rule must be addressed through ritual worship (*pūjā*) by offerings of fragrances, flowers, and incense, as also portrayed in the *Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtra*.

In Hikayat Damar Bulan, the threat to Majapahit originates from Menak Jingga, portrayed as a king with aggressive, expansionist ambitions. He first sends a letter to the Duke of Puger, demanding submission to the Kingdom of Blambangan. When the duke refuses, Menak Jingga dispatched his forces to besiege Puger, initiating an imbalanced conflict between the two sides as the forces from eastern Java vastly outnumber the defenders. In the ensuing battle, the Duke of Puger is killed. The Majapahit forces, led by Layang Setra and Layang Kunitir, arrive to assist but are unable to overcome Menak Jingga's commanders, Kotbuta and Angkatbuta. This illustrates that Menak Jingga's expansionist ambitions are supported by a large and formidable military force, one that even Majapahit cannot rival. Following Puger's fall, resistance is taken up by the Duke of Tuban. However, he too is defeated by the Blambangan forces. The narrative portrays the Blambangan army as savage and ruthless. The Duke of Tuban, already weakened and seated from exhaustion, is shot and dismembered by the regents, not in a one-on-one duel but in an act of collective violence. In fact, his head is cut off or beheaded. His decapitated body is later discovered by his sons, Raden Buntaran and Raden Wantangan, in a grotesque state—bones, hair, and flesh scattered. They then command the following (Hikayat Damar Bulan, 1815:30-31):

Maka lalu ditaruhnya pada suatu tempat, maka lalu diberikannya pada Demang Gatul, disuruhnya candikan. Hata, maka Demang Gatul pun pergilah menyandakan mayat Dipati Tuban serta diiringkan orang lima ratus itu.

[Then it is placed in a certain place, and then it is given to Demang Gatul, who is ordered to enshrine it. So, Demang Gatul goes to enshrine the corpse of the Duke of Tuban, accompanied by the five hundred men.]

Instead of being interred according to Islamic traditions, the duke's body is placed in a temple, as directed by Raden Buntaran and Raden Wantangan to Demang Gatul, reflecting Hindu funeral customs. In the excerpt above, the enshrinement process seems to involve five hundred people, not only accompanying but also actively participating in the cremation of the body. This clearly reflects the Hindu practices in the daily lives of the characters, particularly in the rites associated with death. According to Soekmono (1977:13), the temple is linked to Dewi Durga, the Goddess of Death, as the word *candi* is one of her alternative names, *Candika*. Stutterheim (1931:2) states that deceased kings or high-ranking officials were enshrined (*cinandi*), meaning that their ashes were placed in a temple. Meanwhile, Kieven (2013:95), drawing on Soekmono's views, explains that temples were not burial sites (repositories for ashes) but rather commemorative monuments. In *Hikayat Damar Bulan*, the text does not clearly describe how the enshrinement of the Duke of Tuban takes place, so the status of the temple built by Demang Gatul remains uncertain, whether it served as a burial site or simply as a commemorative monument. What is clear and significant to underscore is that the act of enshrining a deceased official implies the presence of Hindu elements in the narrative.

Furthermore, this study posits that Hindu influence in this tale is further evidenced by the role of Damarwulan, who emerges as the hero to save Prabu Rara and Majapahit from Menak Jingga. Damarwulan's triumph culminates in a union between him and Prabu Rara. In the story, Prabu Rara dreams that only a man named Damarwulan is capable of defeating Menak Jingga. In response to her dream, she commands Patih Logender to act accordingly (*Hikayat Damar Bulan*, 1815:81-82):

Hai, Patih, engkau tanyai si Damarwulan itu, beranikah ia melawan berperang Menak Jingga. Syahdan, jikalau ia menang perangnya, kujadikanlah ia saudara laki-laki dan kuserahkanlah negeri Majapahit ini kepadanya serta dengan teluk rantaunya dan kukuasakan ia bergelung kekelingan dan kunamakan Brawijaya.

[Hi, Patih, ask Damarwulan whether he dares to go to war against Menak Jingga. Furthermore, if he wins the war, I shall make him my brother and grant him the Kingdom of Majapahit, along with all its coastal territories. I shall grant him authority to wear the head-dress and bestow upon him the title Brawijaya.]

In her writing on women in kakawin, Creese (2015:96-97) explains one form of marriage in which the woman has the agency to choose through a contest or challenge (*sayembara*). In the case of *Hikayat Damar Bulan*, the challenge issued by Prabu Rara takes the form of a *sayembara* with the condition of defeating Menak Jingga. However, this *sayembara* is uniquely directed towards Damarwulan, rather than being open to all suitors, as is typical in such contests where many participants vie for a woman's hand. Prabu Rara promises through Patih Logender that, if Damarwulan successfully defeats Menak Jingga, he will be made her brother (husband) and will rule over Majapahit. Damarwulan's position in relation to Prabu Rara is that of a hero, expected to face and overcome the obstacles posed by Menak Jingga. Damarwulan ultimately succeeds in the challenge, killing Menak Jingga by severing his neck and placing his head in a wooden box. As promised, Prabu Rara marries Damarwulan, and his first wife, Anjasmara, is elevated to the rank of queen, though beneath Kencana Wungu in status.

***Hikayat Damar Bulan* as a Romantic Manuscript**

This section aims to demonstrate how *Hikayat Damar Bulan*, rooted in the Hindu past, functions as a romantic manuscript—one that articulates the ideology of romanticism. In this analysis section, this study does not focus on textual representations that distinguish between the real and the ideal world. Instead, the notions of the real and the ideal can be understood by situating the manuscript within its historical context of when it was written.

Hikayat Damar Bulan was completed in the early 19th century, three centuries after the fall of Majapahit, the last Hindu-Buddhist kingdom in the Archipelago, which ended in the 16th century. The manuscript was written during the British colonial administration, not during the Hindu-Buddhist era it describes. Nonetheless, the narrative remains firmly grounded in the Majapahit period and continues to uphold Hindu-Buddhist elements. This study argues that the Majapahit era, marked by its grandeur and renowned across other lands, is portrayed as resilient, surviving in the face of external threats while continuing its legacy as an idealised world. Just as Majapahit endured after the Paregreg War, the Majapahit Kingdom in the *hikayat* is also depicted as resilient, representing an idealised vision of the past. In this way, Majapahit becomes an emblem of a historical ideal—an era of civilisation and society that the Javanese people longed for, hoped to return to, and cherished in memory.

The character of Damarwulan also embodies this ideal. Pigeaud (1967:231-232) argues that the relationship between Damarwulan and the

Queen of Majapahit introduces a layer of pure romanticism to the tale, with roots in ancient myth. This story is often linked to the Panji narratives, which revolve around the legendary Javanese Monarchs (Ras, 2014:255). The tale of Damarwulan not only served to legitimise the ruling elite but also resonated with the common people, particularly through *wayang krucil* performances—a form of shadow puppet theatre. Thus, it appears that the *Hikayat Damar Bulan* conveys an idealised vision of the world not only for the kings but also for the common people. By the 19th century, however, Majapahit had crumbled into ruins. Java was no longer an independent Hindu-Buddhist civilisation but had become a colonised territory—first under the Dutch-French influence and, later, under British control. The note from the scribe on page 151 mentions that this manuscript was commissioned by Raffles, which indicates a purposeful agenda behind his request. In this regard, this study suggests that Majapahit, with its Hindu-Buddhist heritage as a symbol of the historical grandeur of the Javanese people, was an idealised vision in Raffles' view.

Van der Kroef (1995:25) asserts that, prior to the arrival of Western powers and the onset of the colonial era, Hindu-Buddhism was the dominant intellectual force shaping Javanese civilisation. When the British took control of Java, Raffles became Lieutenant-Governor, believed that the island had reached the height of its civilisation during the Hindu-Buddhist period but had subsequently declined after abandoning turning to Islam (Perkasa, 2021:44). In Raffles' view, had the Javanese retained their earlier religious and cultural foundations, Java would not have suffered from famine; instead, it would have thrived in high arts and intellectual pursuits. Conversely, Islam was perceived as the source of societal decline and destruction in Java, manifested in internal wars and the fragmentation of competing small states (Hannigan, 2015:257-258).

The above paragraph illustrates that Raffles was caught in a tension between an idealised Java (the Hindu-Buddhist era) and the real Java (the Islamic period). Within this tension, Raffles perceived the Hindu-Buddhist past represented a more advanced Javanese civilisation, a world imbued with beauty, truth, and meaning, as described by Pérez (2015:12). In contrast, Java during the Islamic period was regarded as an inferior world—one that, unfortunately, Raffles could not avoid. The real-world Raffles experienced was Java during a time when Islam had already deeply influenced the island's historical, cultural, and political landscapes. Islamic courts had replaced the Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms. This situation was deeply disappointing for Raffles, as Java, rather than showcasing high art, intellectualism, and civilisation,

had become a battleground of competing states. In this context, Raffles, as a colonial subject, sought to distance himself from the reality of Java's present situation. He attempted to reach towards an idealised world, even though the real and ideal could never truly converge. Raffles and the entire Javanese socio-political order could never experience the Hindu-Buddhist era of Majapahit again. What remained possible was the imagination of that world. In this light, *Hikayat Damar Bulan* becomes both a literary and material artifact that upholds the imagination of Majapahit—a longing for an ideal life in Java. Drawing on the arguments of Perkasa and Hannigan, this study asserts that the romantic status of the *Hikayat Damar Bulan* manuscript is a product of the historical conditions faced by Raffles. This manuscript was produced by drawing upon a narrative set in the Hindu-Buddhist period, thereby carrying a historical mission to commemorate that era nostalgically. In doing so and borrowing from Miles' (2001:191) concept, this manuscript articulates and affirms romanticism as the ideological force underpinning its production.

Romanticism in the Context of Colonial Politics

This section further explores how romanticism in *Hikayat Damar Bulan* cannot be detached from the colonial politics, particularly the dynamic between the West and the East. European fascination with the manifestations of Indian (Hindu) religion in Southeast Asia began as early as the 18th century, when figures like Nicholas Engelhard and Jacob Albert van Middelkoop of the Netherlands collected and translated Malay texts in an effort to trace India's cultural and philosophical legacy in the region (Aljunied, 2005:3-4). Raffles' interests and activities during his stay in Java were thus unprecedented but rather continued a tradition of colonial practice initiated by his predecessors. His interests were also shared among many 19th century colonial scholars, reflecting a sense of romanticism. Romanticism, in the context of colonialism, was manifested in various practices, from the study of Sundanese manuscripts in the 19th century (Moriyama, 1996:173), to the explorations and research for the production of knowledge (Boomgaard, 2006:199), and the archaeological activities during the Raffles administration (Bloembergen & Eickhoff, 2013:93). Carroll (2011:272) explains that British scholar-administrators were influenced by William Marsden's findings (1754-1836) regarding the Hindu-Buddhist heritage in the Malay world. This led many 19th century scholars to dismiss Malay Islam as insubstantial and to view Malay culture as two conflicting elements: the "primitive indigenous" and the "civilised Hindu-Buddhist."

In this context, Raffles positioned Islam in opposition to Hindu-Buddhism, much as 19th-century British scholars and administrators did.

Raffles' desire to acquire the *Hikayat Damar Bulan* manuscript suggests that its production was not entirely free from political motivations. This dimension is evident by the fact that, according to Raffles, unlike the Muslim societies he encountered, Hindu-Buddhism embodied the ideal social order—one marked by a peaceful and harmonious state, consistent with British colonial interests (Aljunied, 2005:7-8). Raffles, who regarded Hindu-Buddhist civilisation as a "high culture", seemingly desired *Hikayat Damar Bulan* due to its depiction of a society governed by order and stability. The defeat and beheading of Menak Jingga, and the symbolic fall of the Blambangan king's body, mark the restoration of Majapahit's societal harmony, resonating with the colonial logic of civilisational renewal. This narrative not only aligns with British romantic ideals but may also have been tailored to reflect colonial fascinations. This fact offers insight into why Islam did not entirely dominate Malay literature and why Hindu-Buddhist legacies persisted, as explained by Ricklefs (2001:61). These stories were not simply survivors of Islamisation by chance. However, they were actively preserved and supported by colonial political forces that sought to ensure the continuity of Hindu-Buddhist stories in accordance with colonial interests. The *Hikayat Damar Bulan* manuscript must thus be viewed as a discursive practice, conditioned and regulated by colonial power, which had its own interests at play behind the production of this tale. In Lyotard's terms (1984:34), although Raffles was not the direct author of the hikayat, his role as a patron made him a meta-subject, whose ideological interests influenced the creation of the manuscript.

This study argues that there were two primary interests behind Raffles' collection of manuscripts: intellectual and economic. Both were facilitated by imperialism, suggesting that the *Hikayat Damar Bulan* manuscript was shaped by dual forms of imperialism: intellectual and economic. Raffles had a deep interest in the natural world, Javanese society, and its cultural heritage, as evident in his monumental work, *The History of Java*. Likewise, Malay manuscripts acquired by or for Raffles can still be found today in the British Library and the Royal Asiatic Society. His intellectual focus was further evidenced by his membership in the Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen, an institution in Batavia dedicated primarily to the arts and archaeology of the pre-Islamic period through to the end of the colonial era (Sears, 1996:77). This demonstrates Raffles' belief, as Lieutenant Governor, that, in order to consolidate and maintain colonial territories, a deep understanding of the environment and society of the

colonies was essential. This is a clear form of knowledge imperialism, where knowledge becomes a strategic tool of governance. As Alatas (2000:23) explains, imperialism encompasses various dimensions: social, economic, political, and knowledge. For Alatas (2000:24-25), knowledge imperialism mirrors economic imperialism: just as colonies are seen as sources of raw materials and markets for the colonisers, they are also viewed as sources of data, which is then processed and turned into publications in various forms for the benefit of colonisers. Modern colonialism, therefore, placed a high value on the accumulation of knowledge and data from the colonies, as knowledge served to legitimise power and reinforce authority (Carey & Reinhart, 2021:20).

In the context of Raffles in Java, he emphasised Hindu-Buddhism as a high civilisation, while viewing Islam as degrading, regressive, and destructive. This view reflects the Western imagination of the East as a place of decline due to religious transformation, creating the illusion that it needed to return to its former civilised order—a kind of civilising mission towards an idealised notion. In this regard, this study views Raffles' romanticism as taking the form of a civilising mission, shaped by his admiration for the peace and harmony of the past. According to Alatas (1971:43), Raffles' conception of peace and harmony should be understood as civility—a trait he considered to be in line with the interests of British capitalist trade. This view of Alatas must, of course, be contextualised within the British presence in Java during that period. In this context, Raffles believed that, under British liberal rule, Javanese society would develop more favourably (Hannigan, 2015:263, 281). This form of liberalism was reflected in the implementation of land taxes as a form of liberal trade and agricultural economy (Wahid, 2017:29). When linked to Raffles' idealistic vision, it becomes clear that he sought a peaceful and harmonious Javanese society not simply for the sake of harmony, but as a condition for effective implementation of British economic policies. In this light, *Hikayat Damar Bulan* becomes more than a literary work. It is a cultural artifact that materialises the desires of the Lieutenant Governor in his political policies during his residence and governance in Java.

CONCLUSION

This study emphasises that *Hikayat Damar Bulan* is one of the Malay texts that faithfully maintains and incorporates elements of Hindu-Buddhism traditions. The romance between Damarwulan and Prabu Rara or Kencana Wungu, set against the historical backdrop of Majapahit as a prominent

Hindu-Buddhist kingdom in the Archipelago, renders this text rich with cultural and religious motifs from that tradition. The Hindu-Buddhist narrative in this *hikayat*, produced in 1815, reflects a worldview shaped by romanticism. This romanticism is especially evident when viewed in relation to the historical context of Thomas Stamford Raffles. During his time in Java, he found himself confronted with a society that had fully embraced Islamic civilisation, while Hindu-Buddhism was merely a relic of the past. For Raffles, this transformation resulted in a sense of disconnection and alienation from contemporary Java. He perceived Islam as a contributing factor to the island's decline, while Hindu-Buddhism represented an idealised vision of a glorious, noble civilisation. Though this ideal era was long gone, Raffles yearned for its revival. The tension between his lived reality and his imagined ideal formed the basis of a romantic worldview, which, this study argues, permeates the production of *Hikayat Damar Bulan*. Ultimately, this paper asserts that Raffles' romanticism cannot be fully understood without placing it within the framework of colonial politics. The production of *Hikayat Damar Bulan* is a cultural-historical event that reveals the entangled relationship between the West and the East. This study contends that romanticism is, at the very least, grounded in intertwined intellectual and economic imperialisms. Raffles' deep engagement with local culture, as evidenced by his collection of Malay manuscripts, represents a Western imperialist practice of extracting knowledge from the Eastern nation. Within the context of colonial politics, *Hikayat Damar Bulan* is more than a literary work. It reflects an attempt by the West to engage in the accumulation of knowledge as a form of power, through which ideas that supported imperial economic practices could be instituted in Java.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data in the form of text corpus discussed in this study is available on the Royal Asiatic Society website; likewise all the writings referred to as references can also be accessed freely and openly.

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