

FIGURATIVE EXPRESSIONS IN *UNDANG-UNDANG MELAKA* AND *UNDANG-UNDANG LAUT*: A REFLECTION OF MALAY INTELLECTUAL TRADITION

(*Ungkapan Kiasan dalam Undang-Undang Melaka dan Undang-Undang Laut: Cerminan Tradisi Intelektual Melayu*)

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Abstract

The exploration of figurative expressions aims to identify the conceptual frameworks in traditional Malay texts, specifically focusing on the *Undang-Undang Melaka* (Laws of Melaka) and the *Undang-Undang Laut* (Maritime Laws). These legal codes feature a variety of figurative expressions, such as idioms, similes, and metaphors, which serve to clarify legal principles, societal standards, and cultural values of the Malay people at that time. This study aims to examine how the use of figurative expressions contributes to understanding the development of intellectual frameworks of the Malay community. Interdisciplinary methodologies, including historical research and literary analysis are employed to provide a comprehensive view of how figurative expressions contribute to the exploration of intellectual frameworks in traditional Malay manuscripts. The use of figurative language to convey legal and societal norms reflects the intricate thought processes of the Malay community. These linguistic features reveal the Malay intellectual tradition, which intertwines legal, ethical, and cultural elements into a cohesive narrative, highlighting the importance of language in shaping and preserving cultural identity.

Keywords: Malay manuscripts, figurative expressions, linguistic structures, intellectual heritage, *Undang-Undang Melaka*, *Undang-Undang Laut*

Abstrak

Penerokaan ungkapan kiasan bertujuan untuk mengenal pasti kerangka konseptual dalam teks tradisional Melayu, dengan tumpuan khusus kepada Undang-Undang Melaka dan Undang-Undang Laut. Kedua-dua teks undang-undang ini mengandungi pelbagai ungkapan kiasan seperti simpulan bahasa, perumpamaan, dan metafora yang berfungsi untuk menjelaskan prinsip undang-undang, panduan hidup bermasyarakat, serta nilai budaya yang dipegang oleh masyarakat Melayu pada masa itu. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk meneliti bagaimana ungkapan kiasan tersebut memainkan peranan penting dalam perkembangan kerangka intelektual masyarakat Melayu. Metodologi antara disiplin, termasuk kajian sejarah dan analisis sastera digunakan dalam kajian ini untuk memberikan pemahaman yang komprehensif tentang bagaimana ungkapan kiasan menyumbang kepada penerokaan kerangka intelektual dalam manuskrip tradisional Melayu. Penggunaan bahasa kiasan untuk menyampaikan undang-undang dan norma masyarakat mencerminkan proses pemikiran yang rumit dalam kalangan masyarakat Melayu. Ciri-ciri linguistik ini mendedahkan bahawa tradisi intelektual Melayu yang menggabungkan elemen undang-undang, etika, dan budaya dalam satu naratif yang padu, menonjolkan kepentingan bahasa dalam membentuk dan memelihara identiti budaya.

Kata kunci: Manuskrip Melayu, ungkapan kiasan, struktur linguistik, warisan intelek, Undang-Undang Melaka, Undang-Undang Laut

INTRODUCTION

The linguistic heritage of pre-colonial Malay society is captured in its rich tradition of manuscripts, which serve as repositories of knowledge, wisdom, and cultural identity. These traditional Malay manuscripts encompass literary and scholarly works produced in the Malay world prior to colonial rule. Although Malay textual traditions have existed for at least 500 years, with epigraphic evidence dating back to the 7th century CE, the number of surviving Malay manuscripts remains relatively small. It is estimated that between 13000 and 15000 Malay texts are housed in institutional collections throughout Europe and the Malay Archipelago

(Warnk, 2009:11). Among these manuscripts, the *Undang-Undang Melaka* (Laws of Melaka) and the *Undang-Undang Laut* (Maritime Laws) hold significant importance, providing valuable insights into the intellectual structures that shaped governance, law, and society within the *Sultanate* of Melaka. The *Sultanate* of Samudera Pasai, a prominent Islamic polity in the 13th century, played a crucial role in shaping the legal and administrative systems of the later *Sultanate* of Melaka. As a result, Islamic legal traditions from Samudera Pasai were integrated into Melaka's legal codes, facilitated by close scholarly exchanges and the transfer of knowledge between the two *sultanates*. This relationship significantly contributed to the development of Melaka's legal framework, combining Sharia with local customs (Yakin, 2016:13,19).

The *Undang-Undang Melaka* and the *Undang-Undang Laut* are crucial repositories of the intellectual and cultural heritage of pre-colonial Malay society. They reflect a sophisticated blend of indigenous legal traditions and Islamic jurisprudence. Despite their significance, these manuscripts are often underappreciated due to their limited survival, colonial critiques, and the interpretive challenges presented by their figurative expressions (Hasri Mustafa & Mohd Ikhwan Ibrahim, 2023:1401). The figurative language within these legal codes would have been closely tied to legal authority and governance structures, requiring a focused analysis of legal discourse rather than a general literature approach. These legal codes played a fundamental role in shaping Malay legal and administrative systems; however, the studies reviewed do not adequately engage with this critical text. Understanding how figurative language in these legal documents communicates legal standards, social norms, and governance practices is essential.

The lack of detailed analysis of figurative expressions in these legal codes hinders a deeper understanding of their linguistic and cultural significance, as well as their role in shaping legal discourse in the Malay world. Therefore, this paper aims to reassess the intellectual value of these texts and highlight their impact on the legal and cultural frameworks of the Malay Archipelago, ensuring their rightful place in the historical narrative. To address this gap, the study analyses the figurative expressions in the *Undang-Undang Melaka* and the *Undang-Undang Laut*. It will explore how these linguistic features reflect and reinforce the legal and cultural norms of the time, providing insights into the broader intellectual and cultural heritage of pre-colonial Malay society.

Linguistic Features of the *Undang-Undang Melaka* and *Undang-Undang Laut*

As with most traditional Malay literary works, the *Undang-Undang Melaka* and the *Undang-Undang Laut* contain a diverse range of linguistic elements that enhance their intellectual and cultural significance. A study of figurative expressions provides significant insights into the literary traditions and intellectual heritage of the Malay civilisation. The legal codes were written in traditional Malay and in *Jawi script*, which was the literary language of the Malay civilisation. This linguistic choice indicates that the manuscript's intended audience comprised educated elites and officials of the Melaka court. The use of traditional Malay confers authority and prestige on the text, elevating its status as both a legal and literary work (Nor Hashimah Jalaluddin et al., 2014:206). Moreover, the language employed in the legal codes is formal and suitable for legal discourse. It uses appropriate phrase structures, precise terminology, and technical jargon to convey legal ideas and regulations clearly. This contributes to the manuscript's stature as a legal document and reinforces its authority in Melaka society.

The Malay language, similar to other existing languages worldwide, possesses a substantial array of figurative expressions commonly used in everyday conversations and written texts. Elements such as idioms, similes, and metaphors are essential components of most languages. In the Malay language, these expressions are utilised in both informal discourse and literary works to vibrancy and depth to the language as well as to convey intricate concepts and ideas (Norafidah Tajuddin, 2002:155). However, both English and Malay can present challenges in understanding these figurative expressions, even for native speakers who may not be familiar with them. Context alone is sometimes insufficient for grasping the meaning, and a literal, word-by-word interpretation can be misleading, particularly in the case of ambiguous phrasal combinations (Bordet, 2022:1). Emotional motifs found in traditional Malay literature—expressed through idioms and other forms of figurative expressions—reflect the cultural heritage of the people often without overexpression. Language is a reflection of the culture of its speakers, encompassing their social milieu and way of life. A language is a part of a culture, and a culture is a part of a language; the two are inextricably linked, so separating the two would diminish the relevance of either language or culture (Jiang, 2000).

Consequently, the expansion and progression of the Malay language and culture exemplify how a society conceptualises in its language

the things it observes and experiences. This is accomplished, in part, by employing idioms, which are prevalent idiomatic expressions utilised in speech and writing. Norafidah Tajuddin (2002:156) asserts that an idiom is a fixed phrase with a specific meaning, often functions as a metaphor. In the Malay language, *simpulan bahasa* refers to a distinct type of idiomatic expression that has its own unique characteristics. Idioms are unique to a language and demand an understanding of the associated culture and way of life in order to comprehend the cultural references and connotations they carry. Therefore, the *simpulan bahasa* serves as a linguistic representation of the multifaceted Malay culture, reflecting elements such as the beliefs, the physical environment, and the daily life and activities of the Malay people.

Norazimah Zakaria et al. (2020) provide a valuable analysis of how traditional Malay authors use figurative language in texts like *Sejarah Melayu* and the *Epic of Hang Tuah* to display intelligence and integrity through creative writing techniques. However, their study may overemphasise the role of strategic intelligence, overlooking other important dimensions of figurative language, such as its role in reflecting social norms, legal frameworks, and spiritual beliefs. Furthermore, the study lacks a detailed analysis of specific figurative devices—such as metaphors, similes, and proverbs—that could provide deeper insights into the cultural significance of these literary expressions. A more thorough exploration and critical reflection on these elements are needed to fully appreciate the breadth of figurative language in Malay literature. Similarly, Rahimin Affandi Abd Rahim et al. (2019) explore the richness of Arabic-Malay manuscripts, particularly the *Kitab Jawi*, focusing on their connection to local Malay wisdom. This study highlights the fusion of Islamic knowledge with Malay thought, wherein figurative expressions carry both spiritual and cultural significance. The article stresses the importance of metaphors and idiomatic expressions in the *Kitab Jawi*, which reflect the principles of local wisdom. While the researchers argue that the *Kitab Jawi* plays a critical role in preserving and transmitting Malay-Islamic values across generations, the article also has its limitations. It offers only a brief exploration of figurative language, lacks broader contextual analysis, and would benefit from a more interdisciplinary approach to deepen the understanding of these cultural texts.

According to Montgomery et al. (2007:117), figurative language or expression is using words or phrases that imply a non-literal meaning, which can make sense or seem plausible. Nida and Taber (1969:203) define figurative meaning (or expression) as a word that is used instead of another word or expression that is not its synonym. Figurative expressions

are often associated with other words through thoughts that are typically conveyed through additional elements like idioms, similes, and metaphors. Essentially, figurative expressions use comparisons to describe something.

While Ferdinand de Saussure does not extensively discuss figurative expressions in his book, his views on the nature of language and the structural relationships between signs provide a valuable framework for understanding figurative language. In his seminal work *Course in General Linguistics* (1916), Saussure (1959:67–70) introduces the concept of the arbitrary relationship between the signifier (the linguistic form, such as a word or a sound pattern) and the signified (the concept or meaning associated with the signifier) to explain the nature of language. This relationship is highly relevant for grasping figurative language. Figurative expressions often rely on non-literal or metaphorical meanings of words and phrases to convey ideas, emotions, or concepts. For instance, in traditional Malay literature, the phrase *bagai aur dengan tebing* (like the bamboo and the riverbank) serves as a metaphor for interdependence. The arbitrary relationship between *aur* (bamboo) and *tebing* (riverbank) reflects a concept of mutual support that draws on cultural knowledge. This enriches the language, makes complex ideas more accessible, evokes emotions, and enhances the aesthetic experience of communication, rendering it as a powerful rhetorical tool.

Saussure (1959:114–120) also posits that meaning in language is derived from differences between signs rather than from an intrinsic connection between a word and its referent. In figurative language, meaning is constructed through the differential relations between the metaphorical term and the original concept it replaces or modifies. In this instance, figurative expressions often contrast human qualities with natural elements. Phrases like *seperti bulan dipagar bintang* (like the moon surrounded by stars), emphasise beauty by highlighting the relationship and differences between *bulan* (moon) and *bintang* (stars). Additionally, Saussure distinguishes between synchronic and diachronic perspectives, which enables a deeper exploration of connotative meanings. His views can be applied to metaphors, where the connections between terms are part of the systematic relationships within a language (Saussure, 1959:81–85). Synchronic analysis can uncover how specific metaphors were understood in the cultural context of the manuscript's time, while diachronic analysis can trace how certain figurative expressions have changed or persisted in modern Malay.

Drawing on the opinion of an earlier prominent philosopher, Aristotle argues that metaphors, a form of figurative expression, is a sign of genius and a crucial element of effective rhetoric and poetry (Aristotle & Bywater, 1920:78). When applying Aristotle's view to Malay manuscripts, it becomes clear how metaphors function within this cultural and literary context. In Malay literature, metaphors convey complex social, moral, and philosophical ideas concisely, drawing on local flora, fauna, and everyday experiences. They enhance the beauty of the language and evoke emotions, making narratives more engaging (Aristotle & Bywater, 1920:78). Additionally, metaphors serve rhetorical purposes, such as persuading authority in royal chronicles and legal documents. Aristotle believes that metaphors illuminate ideas by drawing analogies between seemingly unrelated concepts, offering unique insights, and that crafting effective metaphors is a talent that requires intellectual capability (Aristotle & Bywater, 1920:72).

Norsahara Mesman et al. (2022:37) assert that Malays are intellectuals who construct principles of life through wisdom derived from elements of nature. This communal philosophy addresses questions regarding the origins and purposes behind the creation of idioms, which serve as sources of guidance, admonishment, and instruction. According to Norsahara Mesman et al. (2022:36), idioms are spoken expressions passed down through generations, with origins unknown and considered communal property. These expressions convey teachings, rebukes, advice, and satire, imparting life lessons to society. The eloquence in delivering these messages reflects the Malay community's use of tact, ensuring that recipients are not disheartened and are open to accepting the advice. Idioms take various forms, such as figurative expressions, metaphors, folklore, proverbs, and poetry, each possessing significant literary quality and value. These can be found in various works depicting royal protocols, linguistic conventions, marriage traditions, and more.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Historical Context of the *Undang-Undang Melaka* and the *Undang-Undang Laut*

The *Undang-Undang Melaka* is the most significant Malay legal manuscript of the Malay Archipelago. Initially compiled in Melaka, it was later

expanded and adapted across various *sultanates* in the region, with over 40 known manuscripts. These manuscripts vary in length, with some being extensive while others are brief or fragments. They were used exclusively by Malay *sultanates*, such as Kedah, Patani, Johor, and Aceh, and it is believed that these laws were also adopted in Pahang, Riau, Pontianak, and Brunei (Liaw, 2016:xxi). Similarly, more than 40 manuscripts of the *Undang-Undang Laut* were used in Aceh, Sulawesi, and Patani (Liaw, 2016:xxv). Although the matters discussed are generally consistent, the content and language used vary. This variation is due to the manuscripts being constantly revised and adapted to meet the needs of different regions within the Malay Archipelago. By examining the literary heritage of traditional Malay manuscripts through the lens of these two legal codes, this article seeks to contribute to the understanding of Malay intellectual history, legal traditions, and cultural identity. It also seeks to establish the enduring legacy of the use of figurative expressions in the legal codes as a cornerstone of Malay literary heritage, reflecting the intellectual vitality of Malay society.

The date of compilation for the *Undang-undang Melaka* has been debated among colonial scholars, including Stamford Raffles, R. O. Winstedt, R. J. Wilkinson, and P. S. van Ronkel. Winstedt (1958:62, 63) suggests it was compiled in the 17th century, pointing to its syncretic nature and various legal traditions. In contrast, van Ronkel (1923:45,46) argues that the text underwent multiple compilation stages without a specific date being assigned. Wilkinson (1908:102,104) proposes that the compilation occurred in the 15th century, citing its relevance to the Melaka *Sultanate's* socio-political context of the Melaka *Sultanate*. Raffles (1817:297,299) asserts that it was either compiled or revised in the early 16th century, influenced by colonial powers and noting anachronisms in the text. The legal codes were assigned several dates, spanning the reigns of several Melaka rulers. Liaw (2016:61) concurs with Johan's (1999:131) assertion that the *Undang-Undang Melaka* was compiled during the reign of *Sultan* Muhammad Shah (1424–1444), the third ruler of Melaka. Subsequently, *Sultan* Mahmud Shah (1488–1511) commissioned the compilation of the *Undang-Undang Laut*, which, according to various sources, was authored by Kadi Sadar Johan (Liaw, 2016:61).

According to Muhd. Norizam Jamian (2018:28), the significance of these legal codes lies in their universality. They extend beyond depictions of courtly existence and the aristocracy, encompassing the *rakyat*, the

ordinary people, who form a significant part of Malay society. The codes reflect the legal traditions and influences of the region, with Islamic law serving as the primary source of authority. Additionally, they incorporate customary law and indigenous Malay traditions, reflecting the hybrid nature of Malay legal culture. Ali Abubakar (2018:61) identifies Islamic elements in both the *Undang-Undang Melaka* and the *Undang-Undang Laut*. These elements can be recognised through Qur’anic verses or *hadiths* (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad SAW) cited within the texts. Another indicator is that phrases such as “following the law of Allah,” “according to the law of Allah,” and “according to the Quranic evidence” are often used. The arrival of Islam furthered the tradition of customary laws being documented, infusing the regulations of societal life with the spiritual essence of Islam.

The advent of Islam has helped preserve the tradition of customary law by documenting it and integrating the principles of Islamic ideology into the regulations that govern communal existence. As a result, several written legal texts emerged, including the *Undang-Undang Kedah* (Maritime Laws of Kedah), *Undang-Undang Laut Mengkasar* (Maritime Laws of Mengkasar), *Undang-Undang Laut Bima* (Maritime Laws of Bima), *Undang-Undang Indragiri* (Laws of Indragiri), *Undang-Undang Perahu* (Laws of Boats), *Undang-Undang Berlayar* (Laws of Sailing), *Undang-Undang Kanun Brunei* (Brunei Kanun Law), *Adat Aceh* (Aceh Custom), and *Adat-Adat Kapal* (Ship Customs). These texts illustrate the significant influence of Islam on the development of customary law as practiced in Malay society (Muhd Norizam Jamian, 2018:28).

Melaka once thrived as a strategic maritime trading hub in the Malay Archipelago. According to Nordin Hussin (2007:11), the *Sultanate* of Melaka emerged as a cosmopolitan centre, attracting traders, scholars, and adventurers from across Asia and beyond. The socio-political landscape of Melaka was characterised by a diverse population, which included Malays, Chinese, Indians, Arabs, and other ethnic groups from the region. The *sultanate*’s prosperity was built on strong trade networks, diplomatic alliances, and a sophisticated administrative system (Ali Abubakar, 2018:59). The *Undang-Undang Melaka* and the *Undang-Undang Laut* drew from a rich tapestry of legal traditions and influences, reflecting the multicultural and multireligious nature of Melaka’s society. Sharia (Islamic) law played a significant role in shaping Melaka’s legal system alongside indigenous Malay customs. These manuscripts codified a comprehensive set of laws governing various aspects of life, including trade, marriage,

inheritance, crime, and governance. Legal scholars and jurists, influenced by Islamic jurisprudence and local customs, contributed to the formulation and interpretation of these laws (Muhd Norizam Jamian, 2018:28).

The *Undang-Undang Melaka* and the *Undang-Undang Laut* served as foundational legal documents on the governance and administration of the *Sultanate* of Melaka. To a certain degree, they outlined the powers and responsibilities of the *sultan* (ruler), nobility, officials, and subjects, emphasising the principles of justice (*adil*), equity (*hak*), and order (*resam*). These manuscripts provided guidelines for the establishment of courts, the conduct of legal proceedings, and the enforcement of laws. Additionally, they regulated economic activities, trade relations, and social interactions, contributing to the stability and prosperity of Melaka society. These two legal codes became cornerstones of government administration in pre-colonial Melaka, reflecting the socio-political, legal, and cultural environment of the sultanate. Their codification of laws, influenced by Islamic jurisprudence and local customs, helped establish a just and orderly society.

Although these legal codes played a crucial role in establishing the legal and social structure of the Melaka Sultanate and, subsequently, influenced other Malay states, colonial scholars, such as Raffles, Winstedt, Wilkinson, and van Ronkel, have expressed various criticisms concerning these legal codes. Their objections include issues related to authenticity, consistency, syncretism, textual integrity, historical context, practical application, and the relevance of Islamic legal principles within colonial administration, highlighting the challenges of blending various legal traditions. Despite acknowledging that the integration of Sharia principles aligned the legal system with Islamic teachings, which were significant for the predominantly Muslim population, Hooker (1970:8) argues that the integration led to increased confusion and inconsistency. She further argues that conflicting rulings and interpretations occasionally occurred as a consequence of the blending of *adat* (customary laws) and Islamic law. For instance, Winstedt (1945:27) points out that there may have been a great deal of incoherence and uncertainty in the judicial proceedings due to substantial differences between the two systems on particular penalties or legal procedures. Winstedt dismisses the two legal codes as little more than reference books. Furthermore, Wilkinson (1907) criticises the *Undang-Undang Melaka* and the *Undang-Undang Laut* for being outdated and inadequate compared to Western legal systems. He suggests that the

Malay legal system requires reform and modernisation to align with British colonial governance and legal principles.

Nevertheless, the *Undang-Undang Melaka* and the *Undang-Undang Laut* have been recognised for their significant influence on the legal and cultural landscape of the Malay world. The strengths of these legal codes are evident in the integration of Islamic law and *adat*, resulting in a comprehensive legal system that was both religiously and culturally relevant. It helped maintain social order, facilitated effective governance, and supported a prosperous trade environment in Melaka. Ultimately, by establishing a standardised legal framework, the codification of laws influenced subsequent legal systems in the region.

METHODOLOGY

The study employs interdisciplinary methodologies, including historical research and literary analysis, to examine the role of figurative expressions in understanding the *Undang-Undang Melaka* and the *Undang-Undang Laut*. The aim is to trace the intellectual structures within these manuscripts in the context of pre-colonial Malay society. This method involves systematically identifying and categorising various forms of figurative expressions, such as idioms, similes, and metaphors. By quantifying the frequency and distribution of these expressions, insights can be gained into their significance within the texts. This approach allows for examining how these figurative elements contribute to the communication of legal principles.

In addition to quantitative analysis, content analysis provides a qualitative perspective, exploring the thematic relevance of figurative expressions within the broader legal and cultural context. This involves interpreting how these expressions reflect the socio-political environment of the Sultanate of Melaka and the interaction between local customs and Islamic law. The content analysis reveals the role of figurative expressions in shaping the legal and cultural framework of pre-colonial Malay society, highlighting how these expressions helped convey complex ideas and reinforced social norms within the legal system.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Figurative language plays a crucial role in legal discourse, influencing how legal professionals perceive and interpret various situations. Metaphors,

in particular, are prevalent in statutory texts, court decisions, legal literature, and rhetoric. They shape legal reasoning and can determine the validity of arguments. The use of figurative expressions is not exclusive to law; it is essential in all forms of communication, as it helps explain complex or abstract concepts through familiar analogies (Ebbesson, 2008). While metaphors enrich and facilitate understanding, they can also influence perceptions, potentially leading to uncritical acceptance of ideas. By highlighting certain aspects and obscuring others, metaphors can significantly impact the outcomes of negotiations, court proceedings, and academic debates. Their ability to shape legal discourse and justify legal decisions highlights their importance within the legal system.

The following example demonstrates the use of idioms found in the legal code *Undang-Undang Laut* (22:16):

Adapun akan ‘adat orang di atas angin, emas situ taruhnya kepada peti permasan. Adapun akan orang di bawah angin melainkan lekat pada pinggangnya juga dan keris itu tiada jauh daripadanya, karena itu benda yang kemas.

[As for the customs of the people from *the land above the wind* [emphasis added], they place their gold in a golden chest. As for the people from *the land below the wind* [emphasis added], they keep it attached to their waists, and the kris (dagger) is never far from them, for it is a precious object].

The excerpt pertains to a section of the legal code regarding the custom of people from the “land above the wind” (*atas angin*), who store their gold in a safe. Frey (2003:21) highlights the significance of gold in his study of Malay culture as a symbol of wealth, power, and prestige. In traditional Malay society, gold was not just a commodity but also a representation of high status and authority. It was used in royal regalia, ceremonies, and diplomatic gifts, reinforcing the connection between gold and political power. Additionally, it is believed that gold holds cultural and spiritual values that confer prosperity and protection. This association extended into the legal and economic systems, with gold serving as currency in trade. Conversely, for those from the “land below the wind” (*bawah angin*), the *keris* (dagger) is a prized possession, often kept close to their waist (Liaw, 2016:103), highlighting its value as a significant item. Farish A. Noor (2020:292–303) elaborates on the cultural, symbolic, and historical significance of the *keris* for the Malay people, asserting that it is much more

than just a weapon. The *keris* embodies aspects of identity, differentiation, spiritual significance, social status, and ancestral ties. It also serves as a symbol of political authority and martial prowess, functioning as both a practical tool and a ceremonial object. Farish A. Noor (2020) highlights that the *keris* blends mystical, cultural, and martial elements, all deeply rooted in Malay identity.

The terms “*atas angin*” (above the wind) and “*bawah angin*” (below the wind) were used during the seasonal trade influenced by the southwest monsoon. Boats coming from the windward side would arrive during one season and return in another. This trade involved merchants from India, Persia (now Iran), Arabia, the Ottoman Empire (Turkiye), Egypt, and sometimes China due to its extensive trade relations. The lands referred to as “below the wind” include Melaka and other sultanates throughout the Malay Archipelago. This area encompasses the Malay Peninsula (modern-day Malaysia), Sumatra, Java, Borneo (which includes parts of Malaysia, Brunei, and Indonesia), Sulawesi, and certain regions in the Philippines, particularly Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago (Muhammad Redzuan Othman, 2003:107).

Another form of figurative expression is a simile, which is a common feature in the Malay language used to convey abstract concepts that are difficult to visualise and explain. The author’s skilful use of figurative expressions highlights his ability to communicate a positive message, leaving a profound impression on the audience. This approach plays a significant role in conveying hidden messages by expressing the author’s thoughts and emotions through connecting or comparing terms (Kamariah Kamarudin, & Nadia Ishak, 2022:69). Such verbal comparisons are made using terms like *umpama*, *ibarat*, *macam*, *bagai*, *laksana*, *seperti*, *bak*, and *serupa*, all of which convey the meaning of ‘like’ (Mohamad Yazid Abdul Majid, 2010:20–21). In the example provided below, the word “*upama*” is synonymous with “*umpama*” in modern Malay (*Undang-Undang Melaka*, 2:16):

Sebab disebutkan segala hukum ini supaya mereka itu malu dan sopan kepada segala nakhoda, dari karena segala nakhoda itu nazarnya upama raja di dalam jong itu.

[The reason all these laws are mentioned is so that they (the crew) feel humbled and respect towards all the captains because the captains are *considered akin* [emphasis added] to kings within the ship].

The passage above presents a figurative expression in the form of a simile. The *Undang-Undang Melaka* compares the *nakhoda* (captain) to a king, symbolising the supreme authority and responsibility of the captain. This simile, known as “*upama*”, emphasises the importance of maintaining order, discipline, and respect for the captain’s authority, urging the crew to respect and follow his commands. The crew should regard the *nakhoda* with the same reverence and obedience that subjects would show to a king, which is essential for ensuring smooth operation and governance of the ship. The use of the simile “*upama*” effectively communicates the hierarchical structure and expected behaviour toward the *nakhoda*, emphasising the captain’s central role and the necessity for deference and politeness to maintain order and respect within the maritime context (Liaw, 2016:90) as seen in the following example (*Undang-Undang Melaka*, 8:18)

*Demikianlah hukumnya akan segala mualim melayarkan jong dalam pelayaran supaya lepas daripada batang leher mualim dari karena yang mualim itu **upama** imam dan sakalian yang dalam jong itu **upama** ma'mum.*

[Such are the laws for all the mualim (helmsman) to sail the ship during the voyage so that the responsibility is lifted from the *mualim*'s shoulders because the *mualim* is *like* [emphasis added] an *imam* (religious leader) and everyone on the ship is *like* [emphasis added] a congregation].

The excerpt above is another example of a simile using the word “*upama*”, in a similar manner. The *Undang-Undang Melaka* compares the roles of a *mualim* (helmsman) and a crew. The navigator is likened to an *imam*, who leads and guides the congregation in *salah* (prayers). Meanwhile, the crew is compared to the congregation that follows the imam’s lead during prayers. Just as the congregation depends on the *imam*, the crews rely on the *mualim*'s expertise and leadership. This comparison highlights the hierarchical and dependent relationship between the *mualim* and the crew, emphasising his leadership role and the crew’s reliance on his guidance. This analogy underscores the importance of the navigator’s role and the crew’s reliance on his direction for the success and safety of their journey (Liaw, 2016:94).

Just as the traditional Malay society was hierarchical, the social structure on a ship was similar. The *Undang-Undang Laut* outlines the hierarchical organisation on a ship, involving the *nakhoda* (captain),

mualim (helmsman), *tukang* (craftsman), and *awak-awak* (crew members). Each of these positions has specific roles and responsibilities. The *nakhoda* held the highest authority on the ship, much like a king, and exercised complete control throughout the voyage. The *mualim*, who was skilled in navigation, played a crucial role by determining the right time to sail, understanding wind directions, predicting storms or waves, and identifying safe passages in deep or rocky waters. This made the *mualim* the essential “eyes” of the voyage, ensuring that the ship remained on its correct course.

The use of metaphors to explain legal concepts, impart moral lessons, and create vivid imagery is an important aspect of the figurative language that has influenced the *Undang-Undang Melaka*. Traditional Malay literature is rich with themes that depict common situations in the traditional society of that era. Emotional elements are often woven into the texts, using words or idioms that convey feelings through metaphorical portrayals rather than explicit expressions. Rozaimah Rashidin and Nor Hashimah Jalaluddin (2014:415) define metaphor as an old proverb that conveys meaning by associating it with something comparable, thus producing a dual meaning. Malay metaphors can be classified into various forms, including simile, metonymy, personification, idioms, proverbs, maxims, figurative speech, and sarcasm.

According to Norazimah Zakaria et al. (2020), Malay manuscripts not only serve as sources of Malay historical discourse but also contain elements that reflect high levels of thinking. The use of metaphors in these texts urges readers to analyse the context, making them challenging to grasp at first glance. These metaphors are not only rhetorical tactics but also mnemonic aids, facilitating the transmission and retention of legal knowledge within Melaka society. By studying these figurative expressions in the manuscripts, researchers can gain insights into cultural symbolism, moral values, and intellectual depth. For instance in *Undang-Undang Melaka* (46:13):

Adapun pohon pekerjaan kena sepuluh tahlil atau sekati lima atau lima tahlil pada yang fuduli, dibahagi tiga dendanya hukumnya itu. Adapun jikalau sahabat kita membunuh orang bersama-sama dengan sahabat sebab menolong sahabat, itu pun kena sepertiga juga dendanya itu.

[As for the main task, the penalty [emphasis added] is ten *tahlil* or one *kati* five or five *tahlil* on the *fuduli*, the penalty is divided into three parts according to the law. If our companion kills someone together with another companion in an act of assisting the companion, the penalty is also a third].

In this excerpt, the metaphor “*pohon pekerjaan*” is used to represent the hierarchy of work and the corresponding penalties associated with it. The term “*pohon*” (tree) symbolises the structure within which tasks or responsibilities are categorised, while “*pekerjaan*” (work) refers to specific actions being regulated. Liaw (2016:119) describes “*pohon*” as the origin or base and “*pekerjaan*” as actions with negative consequences, such as murder. Consequently, according to the legal code, the person who instigated the offence (murder) will face severe punishment. While there is no direct study specifically focusing on “*pohon pekerjaan*,” similar metaphors, such as “*pohon*” or tree metaphors, do appear in Malay literature to symbolise structure, hierarchy, and interconnectedness. For instance, metaphors involving “*pohon*” are frequently used in proverbs and literary works to depict leadership, relationships, or societal roles (Mardiana Nordin, 2022:85).

In the *Undang-Undang Melaka*, metaphors are not merely decorative; they serve as powerful rhetorical devices that make complex legal concepts more accessible and relatable to the people governed by these laws. By using familiar analogies rooted in the cultural and social context of Malay society, these metaphors help convey important legal and moral principles in a manner that resonates with the community. The broader role of metaphors in legal discourse, as discussed, underscores their ability to frame legal issues, guide interpretation, and legitimise legal decisions. In the context of the *Undang-Undang Melaka*, metaphors played a crucial role in ensuring that the laws were communicated and understood effectively, making the legal system both culturally relevant and authoritative. These metaphors probably reinforced social norms, guided behaviour, and facilitated the acceptance of the law by the community (*Undang-Undang Melaka*, 32:3)

*Adapun hukum yang pertama pada menyatakan berbunuh-bunuhan atau membunuh atau menikam atau menetak orang atau memukul orang atau merampas orang atau mencuri arta orang atau menuduh atau berdustakan hakim atau **berjual titah** atau menyangkal titah itu.*

[As for the first law, it pertains to acts of killing, murder, stabbing, slashing, assaulting, robbing, stealing someone’s property, accusing, lying to the judge, *selling orders* [emphasis added], or denying those orders].

The excerpt above provides another clear example of a metaphor found in the *Undang-Undang Melaka*. “*Berjual titah*”, a term referring to

the act of selling orders, commands, or decrees issued by a ruler, judge, or authority figure, is a metaphor that suggests corruption, bribery, or the unethical practice involving the exchange of authoritative commands for personal gain. This metaphor suggests that orders or decrees can be treated as commodities, ultimately undermining the legitimacy and fairness of legal and governing systems. This, in turn, leads to a lack of trust and respect for the law. Alongside other grave offences, such as murder, theft, and perjury, this metaphor underscores the severity of corruption and the manipulation of authoritative orders. The *Undang-Undang Melaka* stresses the importance of maintaining integrity within legal and governing processes. It asserts that orders and decrees should be respected based on principles of justice rather than personal interests to uphold the rule of law and the public's trust in their leaders and judicial systems. As punishment, those who betray royal commands might be scalped or have their tongues split.

According to Rozaimah Rashidin and Nor Hashimah Jalaluddin (2014), metaphors are typically found in figurative language and are often conveyed through literary texts or poetic expressions. Though metaphors are inherently abstract, they can be based on everyday experiences, allowing us to translate them into more concrete forms. Language is seen as an expression of the behaviour and soul of its speakers, reflecting their intellect and character. The meaning embedded in the Malay language is not only limited to the explicit meaning but also includes implicit meaning. By mapping abstract concepts to concrete experiences, readers can enhance their understanding.

Table 1 presents a list of the figurative expressions identified in the *Undang-Undang Melaka* and the *Undang-Undang Laut*, along with their respective frequencies of occurrence. These linguistic features enhance the aesthetic, literary, and cultural qualities of the manuscripts, contributing to their intellectual framework. Figurative expressions, such as idioms, similes, and metaphors, add layers of meaning, nuance, and complexity to the text, demonstrating the intellectual vibrancy and cultural diversity of Malay society prior to colonial rule. Rahimin Affandi Abd Rahim et al. (2019) assert that signs of Malay intellectuality are evident in their use of metaphors, proverbs, and similes, which require the ability to think rationally, naturally, and analogically at the same time. These stylistic elements serve not only to convey legal discourse but also to represent cultural identity, moral values, and spiritual beliefs. By examining these linguistic aspects, one can gain a better understanding of the intellectual legacy and its enduring impact on traditional Malay manuscripts.

Table 1 Figurative Expressions in the *Undang-Undang Melaka* and the *Undang-Undang Laut*.

Figurative Expressions	Frequency	Meaning
<i>upama</i>	9	<i>Upama</i> is used to explain a legal principle by drawing a comparison to familiar situations.
<i>orang di atas angin</i>	1	The term “ <i>orang di atas angin</i> ” (people from the land above the wind) refers to countries situated to the north or northwest of the Malay Archipelago, lying beyond the influence of the monsoon winds.
<i>orang di bawah angin</i>	1	The term “ <i>orang di bawah angin</i> ” (people from the land below the wind) refers to the countries and regions within the Malay world located south of the prevailing monsoon winds.
<i>pohon pekerjaan</i>	1	The term “ <i>pohon pekerjaan</i> ” refers to the principal perpetrator of a murder.
<i>berjual titah</i>	1	“ <i>Berjual titah</i> ” means to pretend to act by royal order or decree.

The use of figurative expressions throughout the *Undang-Undang Melaka* and the *Undang-Undang Laut* transforms the text from a mere legal code into a work of art. The manuscripts do more than impart legal information; they also convey the essence of Malay culture, values, and customs through their beautiful language and detailed descriptions. This enhances our knowledge of the past and fosters admiration for the grace of literature and language as evidence of the intellectual and creative accomplishments of pre-colonial Malay civilisation.

CONCLUSION

The examination of figurative expressions within the *Undang-Undang Melaka* and the *Undang-Undang Laut* provides valuable insights into the intellectual structures of traditional Malay manuscripts. These legal texts employ idioms, metaphors, and similes to convey the legal and societal norms of their time while also reflecting the intricate and sophisticated thought processes of the Malay community. Figurative expressions serve as a medium for explaining abstract concepts, reinforcing moral values,

and conveying complex ideas in a more relatable and memorable manner. By analysing these linguistic features, we gain a deeper understanding of how pre-colonial Malay society conceptualised and articulated their worldviews. The figurative expressions found in the manuscripts highlight the Malay intellectual tradition of blending legal, ethical, and cultural elements into a cohesive narrative that informs and educates.

This integration of language and law demonstrates the dynamic relationship between linguistic creativity and societal governance, illustrating how language is a critical tool in shaping and preserving cultural identity. Studying figurative expressions in the *Undang-Undang Melaka* and the *Undang-undang Laut* not only enhances our appreciation of Malay literary heritage but also emphasises the importance of language in constructing and transmitting intellectual traditions. It reaffirms the role of figurative expressions as a vital element in preserving cultural knowledge and articulating societal values, providing a valuable framework for understanding the intellectual legacy of traditional Malay manuscripts.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article.

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