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HIKAYAT SHAMSU'L BAHRAIN IN THE CONTEXT OF HINDU
COSMOLOGY

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Abstract

This article discusses *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain* in the context of Hindu cosmology. The Hindu-Islamic elements which can be found throughout the saga can be viewed as an indication that the work has been produced under the influence of culture and beliefs of the time. This study is centred on Maxwell 3's *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain* and will be analysed by using Hindu cosmological conceptual framework. The method of analysing the texts is the foundation of this study and functions as a platform to medialize the concepts of Hinduism such as Trimurti, Karma, Moksha, Samsara, and Yoga, and the concepts of Malay saga which are embodiment, spiritual adventure, war, success, and setting. These concepts have been fused in *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain* from one end to the other. The fact that the saga is comparable to traditional Malay tales, the former differ widely from the latter as the saga's composition is filled with substantial Hindu elements. The revelation of *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain* as a literary work with its own connection to the *Gangga Negara* and Beruas kingdoms has given an impact on the development of Malay literature before the transition period of Hindu-Islam. The insufficiency of Islamic elements throughout the saga has established itself as an evidence of the spreading of Islam in Nusantara especially in Beruas. Therefore, analysing *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain* from the lens of Hindu cosmology could demonstrate the relationship between literary work and Hindu beliefs.

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1. Introduction

Trading between India and Southeast Asia began in the third century (Rajantharan, 1999). The trading relationship has advanced into a two-way trading when Asian merchants starting to export their natural resources and commodities to Indian market and in return the Indians were exporting their goods to be traded in South East Asian market (Wolters, 1990). In particular, the Indian merchants were harbouring their ships at the port of *Gangga Negara* who was well-known as the oldest kingdom located at the shores of Perak. Trading activities in *Gangga Negara* does not only spread the influence of Hinduism in art and the administration of the Malay community, but also influenced the local community's language and literature (Al-Atas, 1972). However, the influence of Hinduism in *Gangga Negara* was momentary. Following the fall of *Gangga Negara*, another two kingdoms came to emergence: Beruas and Manjung. These two kingdoms had a diplomatic relation with Malacca kingdom which were briefly mentioned in *Sulalatus Salatin* (the Malay Annals) (Samad Ahmad, 2000).

2. Problem Statement

Although the Malay history has proven the existence of all three kingdoms namely *Gangga Negara*, Beruas and Manjung in Perak, there are no literary figures who can be attributed to the literary traditions in *Gangga Negara* and Beruas. Equally, there is no other documentation related to *Gangga Negara* and Beruas kingdoms found except the *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain*, which narrates the fall of the *Gangga Negara* kingdom and the early history of Beruas. The link existed between *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain* and *Gangga Negara* kingdom has been disclosed by Winstedt and Wilkinson (1934) in A History of Perak: "The Country Bahrain stands for Beruas, whose history the purely romantic tale called *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain* (JRASSB. No.47) is supposed in Perak to record!". Winstedt and Wilkinson (1934) states that the Country of Bahrain is another name of Beruas, which the nature of its history is romantic and called *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain*, and is said to be recorded in Perak. This view is supported by Bottom (1965) who views the texts as having a relationship with the early history of Beruas:

The Hikayat Shamsul Bahrain though not really a history, was widely considered in Perak to be an account of the ancient kingdom of Beruas in Perak, and local place-names were identified in it. There are not other sources for the old kingdom of Beruas so this hikayat might prove useful though otherwise it has the appearance of a typical Hindu-style story full of magic and mythology.
(p. 47)

Both statements have proved the difficulties to discover any documents that can be linked to the Beruas kingdom except for *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain* which composition is filled with Hindu elements and tales. As a matter of fact, the possibility of rewriting the history of *Gangga Negara* kingdom – from its fall until the dawning of Beruas kingdom – is difficult due to limited sources of their ancient history. Oral history in relation to the existence of *Gangga Negara* mostly has been passed down from the ancient community to the coming generation up until today. The process of the historic tradition is unregulated

and prone to be exaggerated and overstated. This process has resulted in the emergence of various version of history.

3. Research Questions

- 1) What are the position of Hikayat Shamsu'I Bahrain in the context of Malay history trajectory?
- 2) How Hindu cosmology outline the Hikayat Shamsu'I Bahrain?

4. Purpose of the Study

There are three main purposes in this article. Firstly, it is to prove *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain* as an early work of the Pre-Transitional period of Hinduism to Islam. Secondly, to interpret *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain* in the context of Hindu cosmology and finally to analyze *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain* based on the representations of *Trimurti*, *Samsara*, *Karma*, *Moksha* and *Yoga*.

5. Research Methods

This research employed library-based research. In the library-based research, *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain* version Maxwell 3 – located at the library of School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in University of London – was used as the key material in this study. It is concise, easy to understand, comprehensive as compared to the other copies. The copy consists of 269 pages. The copy has been transliterated from *Jawi* to the roman scripts. In the process of transliteration, the text underwent a process of conversion which involves spelling, sentence structure, and punctuation marks. This process is essential so as to not having any problems concerning the text's spelling, vocabulary, grammar, and language style. This is to make sure the text is clear, concise, and easier for reader to grasp the essence of the text. At the same time, another two sources were used to support Maxwell 3's version: the manuscript of *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain* (MS Malay C.1) stored at the Library of Bodleian Library, Oxford University and at Royal Asiatic Society (RAS), London. The copies of *Hikayat Shamsu'l of Bahrain* from these three sources (Version A, B, and C) are displays below (refer Figure 01, 02 and 03).



Figure 01. *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain* (Maxwell 3), Copy of Version A, pp. 96-97, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), London



Figure 02. *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain*, Copy of Version B, pp. 22-23, Bodleian Library, Oxford (MS Malay C. 1)



Figure 03. *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain*, Copy of Version C, pp. 4-5, Royal Asiatic Society, London (RAS, Raffles Malay 61)

The discussion of this study will introduce the background of *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain* and focusing the analysis toward the constructions of *Hikayat Shamsu's Bahrain* such as birth, adventure, reprisal, war, and success. These structures will be analysed in depth as the main issues of being influenced by five key concepts in Hindu belief namely *Trimurti* (embodiment), *Karma* (reprisal), *Moksha* (emancipation), *Samsara* (cycle of death and birth), and *Yoga* (meditation) (Fowler, 2010). These concepts are then aligned with five formation structures of Malay tales such as birth, adventure, reprisal, success, and setting (Fowler, 2010). In order to situate *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain* as a work produced in the early days of the Hindu-Islamic transitional period, this study puts forward the five Hindu cosmological concepts as a major conceptual framework and supported by influence of Alastair Fowler's work titled *Kind Of Literature: An Introduction To The Theory Of Genre and Modes*. This study will be limited to the data provided in *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain* in order to exemplify the influence and the tenacity of the Hindu cosmological concepts.

6. Findings

6.1. Trimurti (embodiment)

The concept of *Trimurti* can be associated with the character and the characterization of Shamsu'l Bahrain in *Hikayat Shamsul Bahrain* (Maxwell 3). It could be interpreted as the manifestation of the embodiment or personification of Lord Vishnu. The justification is based on the fact that Shamsu'l Bahrain is being endowed with the perfect human nature and has a wide range of supernatural power to save other human beings. For example, the presence of the Shamsu'l Bahrain in front of *Ain Aljan* has proved that he is the only man of bravery, who has proclaimed *Rama Vishnu's* arrow. Although Shamsu'l Bahrain was not born in the form of embodiment, his character can be linked to the embodiment of Lord Vishnu in epic of Ramayana (Ramayana: A Great Epic of Indian Culture, 2010). In the Hindu belief, the embodiment of the seventh Lord Vishnu as Rama is being described as a perfect man with the spirit of heroism, and a man of example with nature to lead since the day he was born up to when he is fully-grown (Rajantharan, 1999). Rama's perfection is also includes his wisdom, strong mental endurance, and ability to be just and fair (Ramayana: A Great Epic of Indian Culture, 2010).

This kind of the perfection can also found in the character of Shamsu'l Bahrain which has been described in *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain* (Maxwell 3) as a perfect man since his mother pregnancy where his birth is awaited by the whole realm. His birth has been described as a blessing, joy, fame, and glory to the people and the kingdom of Purwa Chakra Nakara. Additionally his birth has been welcomed by the rest of the universe by portraying that the entire realm is at peace. His good-looking appearance cannot be compared to other men. The representation of his appearance and physical traits can be perceived from his birth as portrayed in *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain* (1906):

Maka permaisuri pun berputeralah seorang putera laki-laki terlalu amat elok rupanya bercahaya-bercahaya mukanya gilang-gemilang, warna tubuhnya seperti matahari buntal kilau-kilauan tiada dapat ditentang nyata seperti anak-anakan rasanya. Maka terlalulah suka baginda lihat paras anakanda baginda seperti kejatuhan bulanlah rasanya. Maka lalu disambut isteri-isteri raja yang tua-tua, lalu dimandikan dan diselimutkan dengan kain yang keemasan. Lalu diletakkan di atas tilam. Maka baginda pun datang lalu menyambut anakanda baginda dipeluk dicium oleh baginda dengan (5) sukacitanya. (pp. 4-5)

Shamsu'l Bahrain has been described as a skilful man who are proficient in handling weapons and assisted by Rama Vishnu's magical weapons. This has shown himself as man of supernatural. Rama Vishnu's weaponries owned by Shamsu'l Bahrain are capable of beating all enemies and because of his greatness coupled with his noble personality, he is looked upon highly by the people of all strata in the whole world.

6.2. Samsara (cycle of death and birth)

Samsara can be viewed from the point of spiritual journey and is in tandem with the suffering faced by Shamsu'l Bahrain during his adventure to return to his parents in the state of *Purwa Chakra Nakara*. The event of Shamsu'l Bahrain and his six companions being kidnapped by *Jin Mulabazad* is

symbolizing the plight and suffering of the world's for being separated from their parents. Apart from suffering of being separated from their parents, there is another suffering which arises during spiritual adventures and for having to fight with various enemies whether human, giant, devil, or ghost. In clearer perspective, spiritual adventure can be interpreted as an adventure of self-purification in order to find the purpose of life. The context of the war in adventure occurs on the Shamsu'l Bahrain is parallel to the point of view in Hinduism that views war as not only to oppose the enemy, expand the conquest, provide shelter, and demanding justice, but it is also seen as a spiritual journey that is creating and materialising the truth in life (Fowler, 2010).

For example, the motives of war endured by Shamsu'l Bahrain are similar to the war between the Pendavas tribe and the Korowa tribe in the epic of Mahabharata to uphold justice and to deal with conflict between each other. The war between these two factions is also a soul cleansing process so that there is no more revenge, jealousy, and other ill feelings. Reviewing the similarities of war motives in the epic of Mahabharata, the tribe of the Pendavas described in the epic can be represented by Shamsu'l Bahrain and six of his companions, while the Korowa tribe represents the *Qarmadan Dewa*. The tribe of the Pendavas which is being made up of five warlords and their battalion of armies and Shamsu'l Bahrain and seven warlords together with the armies of *Raja Daharamaus* can be taken as the Korowa's found in the epic of Mahabharata. This means that war in the adventure of Shamsu'l Bahrain and his six companions can be featured as a war plot in the epic of Mahabharata's adventure. In the meantime, the war between Shamsu'l Bahrain and the *Qarmadan Dewa* has proved that the tribulation suffered by Shamsu'l Bahrain for having to pass through war by sacrificing the life of *Qarmadan Dewa*. The death of *Qarmadan Dewa* in the hands of Shamsu'l Bahrain has portrayed the attitude of *Qarmadan Dewa* who has been going against the teaching of Hinduism by kidnapping someone's wife. The same goes for Shamsu'l Bahrain's beloved adventure, *Puteri Seri Keinderaan/Puteri Nur Lela* who has been imprisoned by *Raja Buranggai* in the *Gedung Kaca Mahligai*. Shamsu'l Bahrain fought the people of the *Raja Buranggai* which consist of the devils and the ghosts.

6.3. Karma (reprisal)

The concept of *Karma* means good deeds will be rewarded while adverse acts will be requited. In Hikayat Shamsu'l of Bahrain (Maxwell 3), the concept of reprisal has been portrayed by several characters who attempted to prevent Shamsu'l Bahrain from fulfilling his desire and at the same time opposing the nature of life. *Jin Mulabazad's* attitude described in *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain* (Maxwell 3) as having full of envy and greed which has led itself to steal the *Gedung Kaca Biru* which was made as a playground for Shamsu'l Bahrain and his companions. When Shamsu'l Bahrain and his companions were playing in the *Gedung Kaca Biru*, *Jin Mulabazad* stole and brought *Gedung Kaca Biru* to *Gunung Maha Perih*. The reason why *Mulabazad* steals the *Gedung Kaca Biru* is simply to present it as a gift to his daughter named *Si Umi* and at the same time wanted to eat Shamsu'l Bahrain and his companions. *Mulabazad's* action of stealing *Gedung Kaca Biru* which is owned by *Seri Maharaja Darma Dikara* can be seen as contradictory to the order of life. *Jin Mulabazad's* action is a major offense for having a negative impact on himself and has also adversely affected others. A hurry attitude by seizing *Gedung Kaca Biru* and eventually forcing Shamsu'l Bahrain to marry his daughter named *Si Umi* has proved that

Jin Mulabazad is selfish. However, all the needs and requirements of *Jin Mulabazad* and his family were opposed by Shamsu'l Bahrain when *Jin Mulabazad* began to become violent (Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain, 1906). The wicked attitude and evil deeds of *Jin Mulabazad* ended when he and his family died being killed by Mardan Ardkas. The deaths of his wife and daughter are the reprisal of his adverse actions. Jin Mulabazad death at the hand of *Mardan Ardkas* repeatedly is the reprisal for stealing *Gedung Kaca Biru*. At the same time, *Mulabazad* has acknowledged his guilt and apologized for the evil deeds he has committed. In the moment of death, Mulabazad has beg to Shamsu'l Bahrain to let him die with no sin and guilt. After *Jin Mulabazad* was impaled by Shamsu'l Bahrain, then only he died in peace. The concept of reprisal which is highlighted through the event of *Jin Mulabazad's* death in *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain* (Maxwell 3) is the main point to be highlighted because his repeated death, has gone through the phase of Samsara and reaching Moksha.

The concept of reprisal highlighted is in tandem with the teachings of Hindu expressed by Fowler (2010). Hindu devotees believe that all human acts on the earth have their own judgement or being referred to as Karma law. Confidence in reprisal and punishment on things done whether good or bad is very important in Hinduism (Fowler, 1999). This is concept intended as a rule in life so that humans are prohibited to do any evil freely (Harun Yahya, 2003). In this context, Hinduism teaches its devotees to do good as long as they are capable to do so. In this regard, Moksha (emancipation) has been reconditioned as a success and Yoga (meditation) has been reformed to the setting of the Hikayat. The success of Shamsu'l Bahrain in Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain (Maxwell 3) can be seen during the episode of the great adventures of defeating enemies, upholding justice, ending cruelty, and happy ending of his marriage. Despite the success of Shamsu'l Bahrain is similar with characters in the traditional tales for having similarities in terms of goals, the success Shamsu'l Bahrain to marry *Tuan Puteri Seri Keinderaan* has shown that he has reached the pinnacle of success. Thus, the success of Shamsu'l Bahrain can be interpreted as a success in the emancipating life with God. This concept is able to link the success of life that has been claimed in Hinduism. The final goal in the life of Hindu devotees is to achieve an outer and inner happiness by being united with Brahman (Moksha) (Fowler, 2010). In this context, Hindu devotees believe that every life will be evaluated for their every action. If Hindu devotees perform practices according to the Hindu belief, they will be free from cycle of birth. To them, they will live eternal life which is united with lord Brahman.

6.4. Moksha (emancipation) and Yoga (meditation)

The interpretation of this *Karma* has proven that Hindu teachings are stressing the need to constantly take charge of their life and achieve *Moksha*. The author of Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain (Maxwell 3) did not exemplify the success of Shamsu'l Bahrain in achieving *Moksha* as demanded in Hindu beliefs, but there are some characters in the Hikayat who have shown that they have achieved *Moksha*. In Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain, the achievement of Moksha and eternal consolidation can be seen from three great roles. The character of *Jin Mulabazad* who has been through war with the Shamsu'l Bahrain and finally he has reached *Moksha*. This is apparent when Shamsu'l Bahrain together with *Jin Mulabazad* and six of his confidants hiked *Gunung Maha Perih*. While for Yoga, it is associated with the setting. In *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain* (Maxwell 3), the settings described are more distinct than the

settings found in traditional Malay tales because the former involves the setting of land, underground, fairyland, and sea. For example, in *Hikayat Raja Muda*, the setting on the land and fairyland are often used to depict the Raja Muda's adventure. Raja Muda's adventure while in the jungle is the foundational to the plot development so that his goal to marry Puteri Bongsu can be realised. Following the adventures, the plot in the *Hikayat Raja Muda* has been developed by displaying the event of *Princess Bongsu* flying to fairyland (Liaw Yock Fang, 2011). The setting of the fairyland has made the *Hikayat* to have an interesting plot. The settings of Malay tales are mostly on land such as inside the palace, in the jungle, hills and so on. In terms of fairyland setting, this background is linked to the goddess of the fairyland and an event that occurs in fairyland is hardly given a longer stretch of time. The traditional tales also rarely utilise the underwater as their setting. Usually, when it comes to this kind of setting, it only happens on the surface of the sea. *Hikayat Anggun Che Tunggal* is one of the works that has been produced by using the sea as the setting. This can be seen from *Anggun Che Tunggal* voyage in search for a wife. In this regard, the *Hikayat*'s plot has featured a voyage on sea as its setting. Examining the setting described in a traditional tales, *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain* (Maxwell 3) has also featured the setting of land and the fairyland. The uniqueness of this setting will be able to interpret the influence of Hindu cosmology in *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain* (Maxwell 3). According to Purana manuscript, the universe is divided into three parts, namely the realm of land, the realm of fairyland, and the realm of sea. Each realm is being occupied by gods with distinctive kingdoms (Rajantharan, 1999). The portrayal of each realm has been expressed in *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain* (Maxwell 3) such as the kingdom on land is administered by Seri Maharaja Dikara, the kingdom in the ocean is administered by *Raja Mambang Gangga Maha Dewa*, the kingdom under earth subjugated by *Qarmadan Dewa* and there are several other gods, devils, ghosts with their own kingdoms. In the Malay literature tradition, it is apparent that *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain* (Maxwell 3) has been influenced by elements of setting that were also occur in the traditional tales, but such influence has been intensified by Hinduism element such as meditation.

The setting in this context refers to the meditation ground used by Hindu devotees to achieve eternity with Lord Brahman. The setting is often done in a quiet, calm, elevated, holy, and dark places such as in caves, on top of hills and mountains, in the jungles, near the sea and so on (I Ketut Dunder, 2007). The setting of location for meditation is important so as to not be interfered by any form of distraction such as pandemonium, hostility and intimidation from other creatures. Furthermore, it is capable of avoiding the temptation of lust and emotional disturbance so as to avoid the pursuit of material and worldly nature. The process of meditation is also important in order to achieve the levels for consolidation with God after having suffered from death at a certain time (Fowler, 2010). *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain* (Maxwell 3) has reflected the importance of practicing a special spiritual discipline or also being referred to as Yoga or meditation to purify the soul for and unification of life with the Lord.

The process of meditation or Yoga is depicted through meditational events performed by Rama Vishnu who has visited Gunung Maha Perih in order to achieve Moksha and at the same keeping his bows and arrows in a box and to be given to Bahrain Shamsu'l by Ain Naljan. The symbolic of this will is that Rama Vishnu meditation is at the level of Yoga and able to become spiritual with God. Rama Vishnu eventually reached Moksha by proving that the final purpose in life according to Hindu belief was to

purify themselves and the soul in order to produce the thought that the existence of mankind in the world is the same by the Lord's side.

The concept of meditation or *Yoga* in Hindu teachings invites his followers to practice the soul cleansing in order to gain awareness of the importance of physical, mental, spiritual and to achieve eternal happiness after going through the nature of death. The death of *Rama Vishnu* presented in *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain* (Maxwell 3) has clarified that the end of life does not occur in repetitive or Samsara after death (incarnation). Although five of these concepts have been adapted in the form of Malay traditions, the traditional influence of the Hindu cosmological belief concept is still strong in Malay works throughout *Nusantara*. The representation of Hindu cosmological concepts in the composition of Malay works usually occurs in the works produced before the 15th century or also known as the early age of the Hindu-Islamic transition. The literary work group which was in the early days of the Hindu-Islamic transition is believed to contain five concepts of Hindu cosmology that had been adapted to suit local culture at the time.

7. Conclusion

This study shows that *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain* versions (Maxwell 3) which was published in 1906 is a literary work containing Hindu-Islamic elements. This study is able to put the *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain* (Maxwell 3) as one of the literary works born in the early days of the Hindu-Islamic transition. The content of the *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain* (Maxwell 3) sees the influence of Hindu elements as being more powerful than the elements of Islam because its formation is based on five Hindu cosmology concepts even though on principle it is a Malay romance. *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain* (Maxwell 3) has been set up from five folktales traditions such as embodiment, adventure, reprisal, success and setting are in fact influenced by five Hinduism concepts such as Trimurti, Samsara, Karma, Moksha, and Yoga. The method of analysing the text by using five Hinduism concepts has made sure the study is able to demonstrate the principles of Hinduism control over Islamic elements. Hindu cosmological approach by Fowler (2010) as a departure point to study *Hikayat Shamsu'l of Bahrain* (Maxwell 3) as one of the works produced during the Hindu-Islamic transitional period is a study that provides a new depiction of history of Malay literature.

Methods of utilizing the five Hindu cosmological concepts on *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain* (Maxwell 3) would be beneficial in covering the gap in the history of traditional Malay literature. The ability to spell out *Hikayat Shamsu'l of Bahrain* (Maxwell 3) as one of the literary works in early Hindu-Islamic transitional period has succeeded in dismantling the debate that was voiced by Braginsky (1998) on the study of developmental history of the traditional Malay literature which was studied by scholars in general have been refined in depth. The issue of this debate can be reinforced by one of the fifteen principles stressed by Fowler (1982). These concepts refer to the depictions of influence in *Hikayat Shamsu'l Bahrain* (Maxwell 3) as a guideline to cluster into the traditional Malay literature genre. From this point, five Hindu cosmological concepts which have become the elements of construction for *Hikayat Shamsu'l of Bahrain* (Maxwell 3) can be highlighted as a valuable study and spreading the history of traditional Malay literature.

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