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The nobat in early Malay literature: A look into the Hikayat Patani

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ABSTRACT
The Hikayat Patani (Story of Patani), is a Malay court chronicle that was written between the 17th and the 18th centuries but relates to events much earlier. Generally regarded as a historical chronicle, the hikayat not only narrates the genealogy of the royal house but also attempts to establish the Patani sultanate as a proud, sovereign Malay polity with its own distinct identity. It is also the only work of Malay literature that details the musical instruments of the regalia in the royal inventory, a complete repertoire of pieces and instructions on how to perform them. In short, it can be argued that the Hikayat Patani is the only available classical Malay work on music. This article discusses the hikayat in relation to the history and development of the nobat (royal ensemble), to discern the ensemble’s function and role in the political culture and manoeuvrings of a thriving Malay polity under Siamese influence.

KEYWORDS
Court politics; Hikayat Patani; kerajaan; Malay nobat; music instruction

Introduction
The Hikayat Patani (hereafter, HP) is generally regarded as a historical chronicle that narrates the genealogy of the royal house as well as the adat istiadat or customs and ceremonies of the palace. Like many other works in classical Malay literature, such as Sejarah Melayu, Hikayat Hang Tuah, Misa Melayu, Adat Raja-Raja Melayu (Nicolas 1994), there are references to music in HP, especially to the royal ensemble, the nobat, which was part of the state regalia. However, what differentiates HP from the others is that it is more detailed. The text describes the musical instruments of the regalia in the royal inventory, lists a complete repertoire of pieces (see also Misa Melayu and Adat Aceh) and provides instructions on how to perform them. In short, it can be argued that HP is the only available classical Malay work or treatise on music. This unique aspect of HP has not gone unnoticed by scholars. In trying to decipher the musical instructions found in HP, Teeuw and Wyatt (1970) sought the opinions of ethnomusicologist Judith Becker and cultural historian Mubin Sheppard. An expert in Southeast Asian music, Becker concludes that the ‘meaningless sequences of letters’ (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970: 288), are drum mnemonics that were memorised and spoken by drummers before actually playing them. While suggesting that some of the mnemonics may refer to different playing techniques of the drums, Becker is however unsure as to the rhythmic
indications. Mubin Sheppard (1972, 1983), a renowned historian with an interest in Malay performing arts, saw some similarities between the playing of the Patani and Terengganu nobat. He also used references from HP in his writings on the Malay nobat and the asyik court dance. More recent work relating to the Patani nobat has been done by historian Andaya (2011). Beginning with a discussion of sounds as symbols of authority in pre-modern Malay society, Andaya (2012) takes a closer look at HP and analyses the roles of cannons and drums in the creation of Patani identity. Drawing upon indigenous and European sources, she argues that sacred court objects and animals, which include royal drums, cannons and elephants, were visual and aural representations of Patani-ness. While this promotion of a sense of cultural unity and identity is embedded in the text, the HP narrative can nonetheless be taken as a representative of the wider Malay world. Patani, like all the sultanates, had its distinct characteristics and sense of locality, but it is still a close part of the larger Malay world.

**Early history of the nobat**

The nobat is a Malay version of the early Islamicate military and ceremonial court tradition known as the nawba (Umayyad, Andalusian, North Africa), tablkhana (Abbasid, Fatimid), naqqarakhana (Afghan, Persian) and naubat (Mughal) (Houtsma 1993). At the 8th- and 9th-century Abbasid courts, musical performances were held in a majlis (gathering) attended by the caliph, high-ranking officials and wealthy individuals (Sawa 1989: 117). Certain performances were held on specific days of the week, in which musicians and poets would take turns to perform. These ‘turns’ were described by Abu’l Faradj al-Isbahani (897–967) in his Kitab al-Aghani (Book of songs) as nawba (Wright 2012). This was probably the earliest mention of the word as a non-technical but music-related term and the practice was said to have been adopted by the Abbasid caliphs such as Harun al-Rashid (d.809), followed by his successors al-Amin (d.813), al-Ma’mun (d.833) and al-Wathiq (d.847).

During these court gatherings, a variety of songs were performed with selections differing from majlis to majlis. A singer would sing when his or her nawba (turn) came followed by another singer until a cycle was completed. This succession of songs, according to Farmer (1967: 199), became an ‘important class of composition’ similar to the western suite. The repetition of songs later became a more refined practice, as suggested in the Kamal Adab al-Ghina by al-Hasan al-Katib (late 10th or early 11th century) and Hawi ‘l-Funun of Ibn al-Tahhan (d.1057), where singers were advised to perform songs of different mood and tempo to suit the disposition of the audience (Wright 2012). The use of nawba to describe a musical suite became clearer when ‘Abd al-Qadir ibn Ghaibi (d.1435) described the four movements of nawba as qaul, ghazal, tarana and furu dasht dasht (Farmer 1967: 200).

The nawba as a musical suite or form was geographically divided into two distinct styles: that of the Maghrib or the western Arab world comprising Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya; and that of the Mashriq or the Arab East, from western Egypt to Iran. The Maghrib was also known as al-musiga al-andaliyya (music of Andalucia) as it was believed that the music was brought by Muslims and Jews from Spain between the 10th and 17th centuries (Davis 2004: 2). It has also been suggested that the seeds of the North African nawba were sown earlier by the celebrated 9th-century Persian
musician Abu l-Hasan ‘Ali Ibn Nafi’ (789–857) known as Ziryab who moved from Baghdad to Andalucia (ibid.). Although the Andalucian nawba exists to this day, Wright (2012) argues that there is no proof that it is an evolution of the earlier nawba, which according to him disappeared entirely by the mid 16th century.

The Abbasid adopted the Persian surnay in place of the mizmar and introduced different types of naqqara (kettledrums), horns and trumpets into their military band (Farmer 2012). Its initial military purpose was slowly overtaken by ceremonial function, and was also used to signal the five prayer times at a caliph’s residence. This ensemble was known as tablhkana or naqqarahkana and was reserved exclusively for the caliph. Similar to the earlier nawba or turns of musicians and poets performing at a majlis, the daily prayer signals by the tablhkana were also called nawba. By the 10th century, this ceremonial and military band (tablkhana), its periodic playing (nawba) and the flying of banners and flags (‘alam) became the ‘alah (outfit) or symbol of a caliph’s power and authority (ibid.).

The Egyptian historian Ibn Taghri Birdi (1409–1470) in his al-Nudjem al-Zahira (The resplendent stars) wrote that in the year 978, the Abbasid Caliph al-Ta’i (974–991) was the first to have the tablkhana played in front of his palace (Shiloah 1995: 71). According to Hilal al-Sabi in his Rusum Dar al-Khilafah (The rules and regulations of the Abbasid court), traditionally the beating of drums in the capital was only reserved for the caliph but the privilege was later given to crown princes and army commanders. However, such beneficiaries were only allowed to signal times for three prayers, the early morning and two evening prayers; and while travelling or away from the presence of the caliph. Al-Sabi further narrated that the caliph al-Muti’illah did not grant Mu’izz al-Dawlah the privilege to beat his drums at his residence in the city but later consented when Mu’izz built his residence away from the city on the condition that the drums not be beaten beyond the gate facing the desert and for only three prayers. When the Buyid ruler ‘Adud al-Dawlah found out about the custom, he too requested and was granted permission from Caliph al-Ta’i, the practice later becoming a Buyid tradition (al-Sabi 1977: 115). The ensemble and the number of times it was allowed to be played (three or five-fold nawba) became honours that were bestowed by the caliph upon deserving generals, ministers and governors. This custom was further practised when the caliphate started to fragment and emirs or semi-independent rulers (who probably had their own private armies) began to assume the privilege of owning the tablkhana and playing of the nawba (Lambton 2012). Later Muslim rulers, including the famous Central Asian conqueror Timur (1336–1405) and rulers of the Mughal empire continued with the tradition.

During the 10th and 11th centuries, attempts were made to sustain a link between the old Sassanid traditions with Islamic kingship. This was done by the Buyids or Buwaihids, who were originally from Dailam, in the Alborz mountains, southwest of the Caspian Sea (Wink 1996: 21). Of Iranian origin, the Buyids controlled Shiraz, Ray and Baghdad before they were defeated by the Seljuks in 1055 AD. The rise to power and dominance of these bands of nomadic chiefs from Central Asia marked the beginning of Turkish rule in the Middle East that would last until the twentieth century. The Seljuks, however, being originally nomadic peoples, disassociated themselves from the Iranian tradition by introducing a ruling concept of the sultanate rather than maintaining the Sassanian shahanshah. As ‘protectors’ of the Abbasid caliphate, the Buyids (945–1055), Seljuks (1055–1184) and later the Khwarizmian (1184–1231), provided a conducive environment for the development of the nawba (Wade 1998: 7).
During the Safavid period in Iran (1501–1736), like other previous and contemporary Muslim polities, the *naqqarakhana* served as the insignia of the shahs. Similar to the Mamluks and Mughals, the ensemble was played in a high citadel to mark prayer times and announce important events, including the coronation of a new ruler (Lambton 2012). However, in the 16th century, it became less formal and was associated with singers and dancers. Throughout the 19th century, the *naqqarakhana* continued to have ceremonial roles at the courts of the Qajar dynasty (1785–1925) in Tehran. The institution was placed under one of the royal offices governing the affairs of musicians and dancers. There was a gradual decline in the role of the *naqqarakhana*, which was viewed as an outdated tradition, and attempts were made to stop the practice altogether (ibid.). Writing in early 20th century, Sykes (1909: 163) noticed that the *naqqarakhana* was still in practice as a mark of royalty in major cities of Iran and was also used to perform at the shrine of Imam Reza in Mashad. When Reza Shah Pahlavi (1878–1944) deposed Ahmad Shah Qajar, the last shah of the Qajar dynasty in 1925, the *naqqarakhana* was taken into his possession and served as a symbol of his sovereignty. About a decade later, as players of the *naqqarakhana* (who were largely hereditary) were dwindling in numbers and without government support, the tradition eventually ceased to exist (Lambton 2012).

In India, the tradition was also practised by the Mughals (1526–1858) where it was known as the *naubat* which constituted an important part of regal status. The ensemble was placed and played in specially built house called *naqqarakhana* or *naubatkhana* situated at the entrance of palaces. The *naubat* became very much involved and was constantly present in palace ceremonies and festivals, and the official timekeeper of the palace, marking the passing of the day and provided accompaniment for female dances in the harem. The birth of an heir, marriages and the coming of the New Year were celebrated with the sounds of the *naubat*.

Under the section on ‘the ensigns of royalty’ in his *Ain-i Akbari* (Constitution of Akbar), Mughal chronicler Abu’l Fazl (1873, I: 50–2) recorded that during the reign of Akbar (1556–1605), the *naqqarakhana* ensemble consisted of the *kuwargah* or *damamah* drums that produced ‘a deep sound’, the *naqqara* kettledrums, *duhul*, gold, silver or brass *karana*, Persian and Indian *surna*, the Persian *nafir*, the brass *sing* and *sanj* cymbals. Special troops were assigned to the department and received monthly salaries. The Mughal *naubat* became a display of power towards neighbouring states and European visitors (Brown 2000: 10). During the reign of Shah Jahan, English traveller Peter Mundy (1909–1936) wrote about a royal procession he witnessed in 1632 where drums of silver and trumpets of gold were played. The same Mundy (1919) later witnessed a similar procession in Aceh during the reign of Sultan Iskandar Thani in 1637, where the Malay *nobat* comprising trumpets, horns, silver drums and a copper gong were played. His accounts show the importance of the *nobat* in a royal procession and that they were already part of a Malay sultan’s customs and ceremony.

**Kerajaan**

Despite its foreign origins, the *nobat* was well integrated into Malay court culture by the 15th century and central to the idea of what Milner (1982: 9) terms *kerajaan* and ‘Malay-ness’. Milner (1982: 1) argues against the use of Western models in studying pre-modern
Malay political culture, in particular Gullick’s (1958) functionalist approach which views Malay government as a ‘working system of social control and leadership’. The raja according to Gullick was only the titular figure of authority but real power lay with the district chiefs.¹ This conclusion is seen as a ‘distortion’ by Milner, who suggests that in the pre-colonial period, the raja was not ‘the ‘key institution’ but the only institution’ (1982: 113; emphasis mine). Apart from keeping Malay societies intact, the ruler was seen as the only means for social and spiritual development, and his subjects were the measure of his nama (name). The Malays ‘considered themselves to be living not in states or under governments, but in a kerajaan, in the ‘condition of having a raja” (Milner 1982: 114). For Malays, being subjects of a raja gives them a sense of belonging, a consciousness of a cultural cohesion and the essence of being ‘Malay’.

For a kerajaan to be established a raja needs to be installed and in traditional Malay customs, a ruler’s ascension to the throne is not legitimate until he is drummed to carefully executed ragam (pieces) of the nobat. As court regalia and symbol of sovereignty, the nobat’s use (or misuse) had the power to affect the lives of individuals and societies, political alliances, stable relations and the initiation and outcome of confrontations. The nobat institution became not only the nucleus of Malay political culture but also a signifier of communal identity. A comparison can be made with Anderson’s (1990: 23) suggestion of the ‘accumulation, concentrating and preserving of Power’ within the traditional Javanese understanding² with the Malay concept of daulat or ‘divine ruling power’ which is vital to the continued existence of the court ensemble and the kerajaan. The nobat’s importance is reflected in HP’s documentation of its instruments, pieces and instructions on how to perform them, akin to preserving a magic mantra or formula to be used for the installation of future kings if need be. The connection of kingship and the use of nobat music in court ceremonies is the result of a long process, from a continuation of pre-Islamic cultures and adaptation of new ones. In addition to the HP, I will also employ fragmentary evidence from both indigenous and foreign sources that will hopefully offer a clearer glimpse not only of Patani’s cultural past but also that of the wider Malay world.³ The HP is divided into six parts by Teeuw and Wyatt (1970: 52) but in this article emphasis will only be given to parts 1 and 6:

(1) The history of Patani during the Hulu dynasty (Inland dynasty)
(2) The history of Patani during the rule of the Kelantan dynasty, ending with the rule of Aulung Yunus
(3) A summary of the bendaharas of Patani
(4) The story of the elephant trainer Cau Hang and Bendahara Datuk Cerak Kin

¹This idea was used by Ho (1991) in her study of the Kedah nobat, where a structural parallel between the nahara-serunai and sultan-chief relationships is made. She contends that although the nahara is seen as the most important instrument of the nobat, as a musical ensemble the serunai is the chosen human and musical leader. This may be particular only to the Kedah nobat as the same cannot be said about the ensembles in other sultanates. In the Perak nobat for example, performance is led by the nengkara.

²Anderson (1990: 23) argues that in the Javanese concept of power, in opposition to Western political theory, it is not the exercise but the accumulation of power that matters. He further contends that a substantial part of traditional Javanese literature ‘deals with the maintenance of power rather than its proper uses’.

³The survey of early Malay literature is made possible by the Malay Concordance Project, an online service initiated by the late Dr Ian Proudfoot of the Australian National University. I use Teeuw and Wyatt’s (1970) English translation for excerpts from HP in this article; English translations of other Malay texts are mine.
The story of the death of Datuk Sai and the struggle for the position of bendahara during the reign of the Kelantan dynasty

The Undang-Undang Patani

The nafiri and nagara

The hikayat begins with the rule of King Phaya Tu Kerub Mahajana at Kota Mahligai, a city situated, according to Ibrahim Syukri (1985: 13), at Pera Wan (Prawae) in present-day Yarang district of Patani, southern Thailand. Archaeological findings show that Prawae was occupied from the 12th until the 17th or eighteenth century when a defensive kota or fort was built (Welch and McNeill 1989: 41). This first king was succeeded by his son Phaya Tu Naqpa, who later became the first Muslim ruler of Patani. The story goes that Phaya Tu Naqpa suffered from a disease and was cured by a Sufi fakir named Sheikh Said from Pasai. Instead of accepting the king’s daughter as a reward, the sheikh made the king promise to convert to Islam, which he did only after being cured for the third time. Narratives of ruler conversions and miraculous births are common in Malay court chronicles. The Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai relates how Merah Silu, ruler of Pasai, was miraculously converted after meeting Prophet Muhammad in a dream and was later taught by Sultan Muhammad, a ruler turned Sufi fakir from India. The role of Sufi fakirs in the conversion of Phaya Tu Naqpa and Merah Silu are substantial in both hikayat. Both these rulers later changed their names to Sultan Ismail Syah and Sultan Malik al-Saleh respectively.

The HP then tells us about a certain Sheikh Safiuddin who settled down in Patani and was later responsible for advising Sultan Ismail’s successor Sultan Mudhaffar Syah on matters pertaining to religion. It has been argued on archaeological grounds that the connection between Pasai and Patani led to the Islamisation of the latter, based on the tombstones of what are locally believed to be Phaya Tu Naqpa and other sultans that Bougas (1986: 36) has shown were made in Pasai. The accommodative nature of the early proselytising process is evident in the apparently only nominal adherence to Islam of the ruler:

Adapun raja itu sungguhpun ia membawa agama Islam, yang menyembah berhala dan makan babi itu juga yang ditinggalkan; lain dari pada itu segala pekerjaan kafir itu suatu pun tiada diubahnya. (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, I: 75)

As for the king himself it is true that he became a Muslim inasmuch as he gave up worshipping idols and eating pork; but apart from that he did not alter a single one of his heathen habits. (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, II: 152)

The implication in HP is that the establishment of the Malay sultanate was in some part due to Pasai and its migrants living in Patani. This is unsurprising as Pasai is considered the cradle of Islam in the Malay world and was seen as a centre of religious authority for the Melaka sultanate. Like Pasai and later Aceh, Patani itself became famed as a centre of Islamic learning in the Malay world, bearing the name serambi Mekah (veranda of Mecca). Al-Attas (1969: 27–9) contends that it was these three Malay kingdoms–Pasai, Aceh and Melaka–that played a dominant role in the spread of Islamic theology and philosophy throughout the archipelago. The diffusion of these ideas was due to the emergence of important trading ports and urban centres in the Malay world, resulting in not only the
continuous arrival of foreigners from many lands, but also the intra-migration of Malays around the region. Much later, in the 19th-century state of Perak, Gullick (1958: 26) notes the migration of Bugis, Keronchi, Rawai, Mandailing and Batak people. Descendants of Melakan, Javanese and Acehnese immigrants formed part of the Malay community in Negeri Sembilan (a state south of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia) in the same period (ibid.). Although conscious of their own identity, Gullick (1958: 25) suggests that these anak dagang (immigrants) and anak negri (local-born Malays) still practised a ‘general Indonesian culture’. This interaction and cross-fertilisation of ideas helped facilitate the standardisation of religion, language and customs, hence creating a sense of cultural unity and cohesion or ‘Malay-ness’ (Barnard 2001; Matheson 1979; Milner 1982, 2008; Reid 2001).

Sultan Ismail Syah produced two sons and a daughter and both his sons succeeded in turn to Patani throne. Apart from his daughter, Siti Aisyah, who was previously known as Tunku Mahachai, Sultan Ismail Syah’s two sons were also given Islamic names by Sheikh Said; the eldest was called Mudhaffar Syah and youngest Manzur Syah. The instruments of the nobat are first mentioned in the story of the marriage of Sultan Ismail’s daughter Siti Aisyah to Raja Jalal, who was made the bendahara (prime minister).


Raja Jalal was made prime minister. Two years later Raja Aisyah and her husband were made rulers of Sai by her royal father, with all the ceremonies of great rulers, and for their installation the trumpets were blown and the kettledrums beaten. (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, II: 158)

The mention of the nafiri and negara shows the importance of the instruments as part of an installation process and in this case it also showed the right of a sultan to legitimise his son-in-law as a ruler by giving him Sai as a dominion to rule. Although the Islamisation of Patani is ascribed to the influence of Pasai, Patani’s nobat however is said to be from Melaka as recounted in the Sejarah Melayu:

Maka Cau Seri Bangsa pun berbuatlah negerilah di sana. Setelah sudah, maka negeri itu dinamai baginda Pak Tani, mengikut nama payang itu, maka disebut orang datang sekarang Petani. Maka Cau Seri Bangsa pun menyuruhkan menterinya Okun Pola namanya, mengadap ke Melaka, memohon nobat pada Sultan Mahmud Syah (Sejarah Melayu 1979: 228)

Then Cau Seri Bangsa established a state there. Once completed, it was called Pak Tani, after the fisherman’s name, and it is known by people today as Petani. Then Cau Seri Bangsa sent his minister Okun Pola to pay obeisance to Melaka, to ask for a nobat from Sultan Mahmud Syah.

The Sejarah Melayu narration continues with Okun Pola and the letter from Patani being accorded the receiving ceremony similar to Pahang, indicating its vassal status. This is further shown by the use of the term anakanda (son) by Cau Seri Bangsa in addressing himself and ayahanda (father) towards Sultan Mahmud Syah in his letter. The Patani ruler was then dinobatkan (installed) in Patani styled as Sultan Seri Ahmad Syah (Sejarah Melayu 1979: 229). This episode alludes to Melaka’s brief control over Patani at the end of the 15th century when Siamese influence over the peninsula was undermined by Melaka’s growing power. After conquering Pahang and Kelantan, which were under Siamese rule, Melaka managed to extend its influence north of the peninsula,
leading the states of Kedah and Patani to request the nobat as a sign of submission (Bougas 1994: 13).

There is also mention of continuing with the customs of great kings in HP, in reference to either the practice of previous rulers of Patani or the early Muslim sultanates in the wider Indian Ocean. Since the nobat is said to have been given by the Sultan of Melaka, the ‘great kings’ could also mean the rulers of 15th-century Melaka. In any case, it shows the wholesale adaptation of the naqqarakhana and naubat tradition of the Islamicate world as a symbol of a ruler’s dominion and his prerogative to bestow it upon smaller polities as an acknowledgement of sovereignty or a gift of honour to high ranking officials. A similar story is told in the Sejarah Melayu when Sri Bija Diraja was installed as ruler of Pahang by the Sultan of Melaka in recognition of his success in capturing Maharaja Dewa Sura, the Siamese ruler of Pahang (Sejarah Melayu 1979: 92). Considering his lower standing, Sri Bija Diraja was given the nobat selengkapnya (complete) but without the nagara drum. In the case of HP, the use of the nafiri and nagara, being the most important instrument of the nobat, reflects the importance of the bendahara post, in addition to Raja Jalal being the sultan’s son-in-law. It was also a practice of 15th-century Melaka where the use of the nobat was based on the hierarchical nature of the instruments in relation to political stature. However, the ceremony is described in less detail (probably due to its lesser importance) as compared to Sejarah Melayu and Hikayat Raja Pasai where the sitting positions of nobles in the balairung (audience hall) and particular ragam are mentioned.

The drumming of Sultan Manzur Syah and Nang Liu-liu

Sultan Ismail was succeeded by his eldest son Raja Mudhaffar Syah. During his reign Patani experienced an increase in economic activities that resulted in a prosperous and peaceful sultanate (Puaksom 2009: 81). Under the new sultan, Patani sought to establish good relations with its neighbours, especially the Siamese state of Ayudhya. Sultan Mudhaffar even went to the extent of residing in Ayudhya for nearly two months, but was deeply offended by the Siamese ruler’s offer of a woman for him to marry. This perceived insult led to a war between Patani and Siam in 1563. Although Sultan Mudhaffar Syah managed to enter the Siamese king’s palace and forced the king to flee, the Patani forces were repelled and retreated to Patani led by his younger brother Manzur. However the sultan and 1,500 of his followers remained in Ayudhya, though their fate was not mentioned in HP. On his return to Patani, Sultan Mudhaffar Syah’s younger brother Manzur was installed as the new sultan of Patani.


After they had arrived the king disembarked and entered the town, and went to his brother’s palace where he seated himself on the royal throne. Then the installation drum was beaten,

4Serri Bija Diraja is a title for the fourth most senior noble in the 15th-century Melaka sultanate after bendahara (prime minister), penghulu bendahari (finance minister) and temenggung (defence minister). Together with the laksamana (admiral), he is in charge of military campaigns.
It appears that this installation ceremony was done hastily. During the absence of Sultan Mudhaffar and his brother Manzur, Patani was left in the care of their brother-in-law the bendahara of Sai, Raja Jalal, who was made regent. On his return from Siam, Sultan Manzur Syah was unsure of the bendahara's view on him becoming sultan. He sailed past Patani and anchored at Beruas without Raja Jalal’s knowledge. Sultan Manzur concocted a story of Johor’s impending attack on Sai, so that the bendahara stayed clear of Patani and assigned someone to monitor his movements. Without the knowledge of Raja Jalal, Sultan Manzur Syah sailed back to Patani and installed himself as sultan. Raja Jalal learned about his brother-in-law’s installation and came to Patani to wait on his new sultan. He later returned to Sai and continued to rule as bendahara until his death some time later.

In this story two ceremonies were conducted simultaneously. Firstly, there was the installation of the sultan followed by the menjunjung duli ceremony. The first installation could be an 'informal' ceremony called the pertabalan kerajaan or state installation. This is done immediately after the death of a sultan before the body is brought down from the palace for burial. According to Malay royal custom, a deceased ruler cannot be buried until a successor is named and the strict adherence to this adat was evident during the succession crisis of Perak in 1871 when the body of the late Sultan Ali (r.1865–1871) lay in state for 40 days before he was finally buried. In the case related in HP, Sultan Mudhaffar was presumed dead and the ceremony was conducted in the absence of the deceased sultan’s body. In Perak, a mourning period was normally observed after a death of a sultan before a successor was installed as related in the Misa Melayu:

Then his majesty’s younger sibling Raja Muda succeeded the government of his brother to become the caliph of the state of Perak. Later, it was commanded that the body of Sultan Mahmud Syah be prepared, and then buried in accordance with the tradition of the state of Perak. Then his majesty’s younger brother stopped the beating of the nobat for 20 days in mourning of his brother. After 20 days, his majesty Raja Muda was drummed to the throne styled as Paduka Seri Sultan Alaudin Mansur Syah Iskandar Muda Khalifatur-Rahim.

This passage describes the two-step ascension process of the 18th-century Perak court where a successor was first named before the burial ceremony. This was followed by a mourning period of 20 days in which the sound of the nobat was not heard. It is obvious that the mourning period was not observed by Sultan Manzur – not only was the nobat played but he continued with his official installation ceremony (pertabalan adat). This could simply be a difference in royal adat between Patani and Perak, but it
was more likely due to the unsettled political climate that could have pressed Sultan Manzur to officially hasten the establishment of a new kerajaan.

The term *menjunjung duli* has two meanings. Firstly, it is a physical act of paying homage to a sultan by saluting him (which is done annually or biennially as a renewal of pledge of loyalty), normally involving the act of kneeling on the floor and moving forward three times. This act was described in HP when the rebellious Bendahara Kayu Kelat, after receiving the scarf of Queen Ijau, knelt down and paid homage three times in a row (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, I: 102). Secondly, it is also a ceremony involving the bestowing of royal titles and honours. The *menjunjung duli* ceremony above was a combination of both; while the new sultan was being paid homage by his nobles, he then appointed the successors of the dead ministers and officials of his brother. This ceremony continued with another installation ceremony:


The cannon Nang Liu-liu was provided with a fringed umbrella and the drums were beaten for it for three days and nights. During these three days, no drums were yet beaten for the king himself. After the official beating of the drums for the cannon was finished, only then was the king himself installed to the beat of the royal drums, in accordance with the traditions for kings newly installed on the royal throne. (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, II: 162)

The sounds of the *nobat* and *bedil* (cannon) were a measure of a Malay sultan’s authority and prestige (Andaya 2011). The advent of gun technology in the 15th century expanded the sonic dominion of Malay rulers established earlier by the *nobat*. Their ability to aurally control society made them objects of reverence, viewed as animate and bestowed with supernatural powers. The pairing of the *nobat* and cannon (including firearms) became part of the Malay court *adat* for both solemn and auspicious occasions. The *Hikayat Raja Pasai* notes this pairing in the installation of the first Muslim ruler of Pasai:


Then the installation drum was beaten and all the instruments started to sound. Then the signalling cannon was prepared and all the warriors and people paid obeisance proclaiming ‘Long live the king of the world, shadow of God on earth’.

The ‘installation’ of the cannon is a propitiation ritual, as a sign of veneration and fulfilment of a promise. During his escape from Ayudhya, Sultan Manzur made a promise to the cannon named Nang Liu-liu that if ‘she’ could help him fend off the pursuing Siamese, he would have the royal drums beaten for her for seven days. Eventually Nang Liu-liu’s shots managed to sink many Siamese boats and frightened the rest from coming close to Sultan Manzur’s ship. Similar to state swords, krises and instruments of the *nobat*, the cannon symbolises Sultan Manzur’s *daulat* and is believed to be crucial to the safety and wellbeing of the state. The drumming of Nang Liu-liu was then followed by the ‘official’ installation ceremony of the sultan which took place after three days (short
By delaying his own installation, Sultan Manzur showed respect and gratitude to the great bedil that helped save his life, in turn restoring Patani’s pride. Propitiation rituals are common in Malay courts. In Perak, the tabal pusaka ceremony is conducted to officially ‘install’ the guardian jinns of the state and their regalia. Prior to the early 1960s, instruments of the Perak nobat went through a ritual called berjamu to ‘feed’ and appease the spirits said to inhabit them in order to maintain their ‘services’. The anthropomorphism of objects, a retention of underlying animist beliefs, is central to the traditional Malay concept of power and the establishment of kerajaan.

The Siamese drums

In an effort to restore Patani-Siamese relations and seek pardon from the ruler of Siam, Sultan Manzur Syah sent an envoy, Wan Muhammad, to Ayudhya. On arrival, Wan Muhammad was received by the court of Siam with a ceremony similar to that of the Melaka sultanate, a century earlier. Melaka royal protocols dictate that envoys and letters from other states must be received with regalia of the state which included the nobat. Instruments used varied according to the stature of the state they were from. In the Sejarah Melayu, it is explained that letters from Pasai and Haru, where the sultans were considered similar in status to Melaka, were received with full state regalia. This included the full instruments of the nobat – nafiri, nagara, gendang and serunai flanked by a pair of white state umbrellas (Sejarah Melayu 1979: 71). Letters and envoys from other lesser states were received dikurangkan hormatnya (lesser respect) with just the gendang and serunai accompanied by a yellow umbrella (Sejarah Melayu 1979: 71). For letters from a sultan of a slightly higher status, the nafiri was played alongside a yellow and a white umbrella. Envoys were received and carried to the palace on elephants, horses or accompanied on foot, according to their status as viewed by the Melaka sultanate. Before the envoys were sent off, they were given robes of honour and gifts, even those from states of ‘lower’ status such as Rekan (Rokan) (Sejarah Melayu 1979: 71). The Siamese court ceremony in welcoming envoys and letters is reported in the HP as follows:

Setelah sampai ke labuhan pada keesokan harinya maka surat dan segala bingkis pun diarak oranglah dengan gendang nafiri, dan payung iram kekuningan pun terkembanglah kiri kanan gajah menanggung surat itu. (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970: 93)

After arriving at the port the next day the letter and all gifts were paraded accompanied by gendang and nafiri and yellow fringed umbrellas were opened to the left and right of the elephant carrying the letter. (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970: 167)

The similarity of the adat with that of Melaka suggests shared Hindu-Buddhist cultural influences prior to the coming of Islam in Southeast Asia, especially that of Srivijayan court culture. It might also be due to intercultural exchanges during periods of Siamese excursions into the Malay Peninsula. The use of only two instruments and two yellow umbrellas may indicate a ‘lesser’ treatment accorded to the Patani sultanate which is considered a vassal state. The nafiri mentioned by the authors of HP could be the Siamese curved metal horn trae ngawn used traditionally in court ceremonies, welcoming guests and war. The envoy and letter were well received by Beracau, the Siamese king and it is reported that Wan Muhammad placed his head under the king’s feet as sign of submission.
This mission was considered a success when Wan Muhammad, who was given the title ‘Orangkaya Seri Agar Diraja’ prior to his trip by Sultan Manzur Syah, was ceremoniously welcomed from Ayudhya with a letter from Beracau pardoning the deeds of the Sultan’s elder brother. This diplomatic triumph was seen as a sign of Sultan Manzur Syah’s ‘divine power’ as ruler of Patani albeit still under the suzerainty of Siam; as his nobles exclaimed:


Hail my Lord, may Your Majesty’s divine power on the royal throne increase. (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, II: 175)

This sentence encapsulates the whole idea of Malay kingship. Here we have the words daulat, Duli Yang Maha Mulia and kerajaan which reflect the different cultural and religious influences that were blended together to form what has become a quintessentially Malay concept of power and governance. Daulat is seen as the fluid central power that resides in the body of the ruler and the regalia, power that is capable of both good and evil. It is believed that a person who goes against the ruler (derhaka) is bound to incur ‘divine’ retribution (tulah or kena daulat). The ruler with all this ‘divine’ power is yet reminded of his mortal self by the honorific Duli Yang Maha Mulia (literally, the Dust of the Noblest of All) that he is still the ‘dust’ of the Almighty, a servant of Allah. Thus, this servant who is bestowed with extraordinary powers by the grace of God is the one worthy of sitting on the throne and manages the affairs of the state (kerajaan).

The time-keeping ensemble

The years between 1572 and 1584 saw Patani engulfed in political turmoil. The HP relates how two palace rebellions resulted in the deaths of Sultan Patik Siam (r.1572–1573) and his brother Raja Bambang (1533–1573), both sons of Sultan Mudhaffar Syah. This left the throne open to the six sons and daughters from the line of Sultan Manzur Syah in which Raja Bahdur was chosen as ruler at the age of ten, styled as Sultan Bahdur Syah (r.1573–1584). From the beginning there were constant urgings from a court official named Seri Amar Pahlawan to Sultan Bahdur Syah’s elder brother Raja Bima to dethrone his younger sibling. Due in part to an insulting incident in which Raja Bima was asked by Sultan Bahdur to dismount from a royal elephant, Raja Bima had made up his mind to kill his brother. After consulting Seri Amar Pahlawan, who promised to let him inside the palace compound, Raja Bima waited until the sound of the nobat was heard.

Syahadan tatkala sudah orang nobat subuh juga maka pintu Wang pun dibuka oranglah (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, I: 99)

Then, as soon as the drum for the morning prayer has been beaten, people opened the gate of the royal compound. (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, II: 172)

In HP we have the earliest account of the use of the nobat for religious purposes in accordance with the practice of Muslim caliphs centuries earlier. Although nobat pieces in the Misa Melayu carry the title of certain prayer times such as ‘Nobat Subuh’ (Drum for the morning prayer) and ‘Nobat Isyak’ (Drum for the night prayer), there is no
mention of the nobat being performed to signal the start of prayer in any early texts. Here we have two instances in which the nobat was played to indicate prayer times and the ragam ‘Nobat Subuh’ was probably the obvious piece to be played. The drumming during the Friday prayer times could have used other ragam and the signalling of the morning prayer by the nobat also marked the opening of the palace gate. The sound of the Friday nobat even garnered the respect of the rebellious bendahara on his way to confront the Queen:

Maka bendahara pun berhenti seketika menengar bunyi nobat palu-paluan pada waktu Jumaat itu (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, I: 99)

Then the bendahara stops awhile listening to the sounds of the drum during the time of the Friday prayer. (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, II: 172)

In 17th-century Aceh, the Friday prayer was an important weekly event. It was an elaborate adat involving a royal procession and the use of the nobat. The Adat Aceh describes in detail the sequence of events that needed to be performed including the list of ragam (Ito 1984). This adat was rarely practised by the sultans of Aceh during the nineteenth century since they were rarely involved in congregational prayers (ibid.). The playing of the nobat in welcoming the sultan to a mosque is still practised in Perak today on the morning of Eid al-Fitr. This signalling of prayer times also continues in Kedah where the nobat is played from the Balai Nobat, a tower located in the middle of Alor Setar town, to indicate the start time of certain prayers. In HP there are two instances where the balai gendang or drum pavilion is mentioned. Teeuw and Wyatt (1970: 172) translate it as ‘pavilion where the mosque-drum was kept’, indicating that the drum was used by the mosque to signal start of prayer, similar to the beduk drum found in rural mosques in Malaysia today. After the beating of the piece ‘Nobat Subuh’, Seri Amar Pahlawan went out to fetch Raja Bima. Once inside Raja Bima made for the audience hall where Sultan Bahdur Syah was about to amuse himself and stabbed him with a kris. On witnessing this, Seri Amar Pahlawan followed Raja Bima to the drum pavilion and pierced him with a lance.

Setelah sampai ke hadapan balai gendang itu maka Raja Bima pun diradak oleh Seri Amar Pahlawan dengan lembingnya kena perutnya terus ke belikatnya. (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, I: 100)

When he arrived in front of the pavilion where the mosque-drum was kept, Raja Bima was pierced in the stomach by Seri Amar Pahlawan with his lance, penetrating as far as his shoulder blade. (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, II: 172)

However in another sentence, the same balai gendang is translated as ‘the pavilion where the royal drum was kept’ (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970: 181). Since balai nobat is still to be found today, it is safe to assume that the balai gendang (as the alternate use of the word gendang and nobat prevail in Malay literature) mentioned in HP was in fact the pavilion that housed the royal drums of the palace. The following is narrated in HP during the arrival of the ruler of Johor to Patani:

When she had come as far as the pavilion where the royal drum was kept the king arrived. When he saw the Queen’s mount he immediately dismounted from his elephant, accompanying the Queen on foot to the audience hall. (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, II: 181)

Whether it was used to store the mosque drums (beduk) or nobat, the balai gendang was an essential part of traditional Malay fort-city architecture as noted in the 19th-century Hikayat Siak:

Maka segala orang besar-besar pun berkerahlah orang negeri, menebas dan menebang, dan berbuat kota, parit dan istana balairung dan balai gendang dan masjid, pedapuran, penangan-gah. (Hikayat Siak 1992: 461)

Then all the nobles asked the people of the state to clear the land and build a fort, drains and a palace with an audience hall and drum pavilion and mosque, kitchen …

According to Muhammad Haji Salleh (2011: xliv), in 15th-century Melaka, the balai gendang was a building or office where the bendahara conducted his daily duties. Readings of Malay chronicles such as Hikayat Hang Tuah and Sejarah Melayu indicate that the pavilion was also the point where foreign guests or subjects would dismount from their horses and elephants before proceeding on foot to the audience hall. The idea of a separate building within the palace compound housing drums of the state was similar in concept to the naqqarakhana (drum house) in Mughal India where a special building was constructed at the palace gates for the naubat to be played to announce the arrival of guests or the departure of the ruler.

This balai gendang must also have been used to announce other religious occasions such as the Eid al-Adha and the coming of Ramadan as noted on the last page of the HP:

Dan hari raya haji tabal demikian itulah tiupnya, dan tabal tabal tatkala memegang tiga kali demikanlah tiuplah juga. (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, I: 144)

And at the festival of the pilgrimage, at the beating of the drum, the trumpets should be blown in the same way, and at the beating of the drums on the three days preceding the commencement of the fast let the trumpets be blown in the same way. (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, II: 217)

After the deaths of Sultan Bahdur Syah and Raja Bima, Patani was left with four female heirs and saw the beginning of reigning queens. The first queen to rule was Raja Ijau (r.1584–1616) followed by her sisters Raja Biru (r.1616–1624), Raja U ngu (r.1624–1635) and Raja U ngu’s daughter Raja Kuning (r.1635–1688?). During the reign of Raja Ijau, Patani was open to commerce that saw an increase in foreign trade. The Dutch and British were allowed to open trading factories and European travellers to Patani spoke highly of the queen (Amirell 2011). After 32 years on the throne Raja Ijau was succeeded by her sister Raja Biru and the new queen continued with the previous trading policies. During this period queens regnant were formally institutionalised by the powerful orangkaya (nobles) of Patani and Raja Biru’s ascendency seemed uncontested (ibid.). Raja U ngu came to the throne in 1624 as a strong leader who had great dislike of the Siamese. While refusing to use the title ‘Phra Cau’, given by the Siamese to her two predecessors, Raja U ngu styled herself as ‘Paduka Syah Alam’ (Her Excellency Ruler of the World) and embarked on an expedition against Siamese suzerainty.
The Johor nobat in Patani

As with other court chronicles such as Sejarah Melayu and Hikayat Aceh, the authors of HP also highlight Patani’s relationship and rivalries with other influential Malay polities including Aceh, Pahang and Johor. Such a contest is related in the story of the Yang Diper-tuan of Johor, Sultan Abdul Jalil Shah (r.1623–1677) who married Raja Kuning around 1623. Raja Kuning was the daughter of Raja Ungu, the third of the line of Patani queens who was married to Sultan Abdul Ghafur Mohaidin Shah (1590–1614) of Pahang. Considering the close relationship of Pahang and Johor, it was unsurprising to see Patani becoming closely involved with Johor politics. This resulted in the arranged marriage of Raja Kuning to the ruler of Johor, notwithstanding the fact that she was already married to Okphaya Deca, son of the ruler of Nakhon Si Thammarat, who had been away for three years (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970). The HP details the ensuing war between Patani and Siam, as a result of this ‘rebellion’ by Raja Ungu against Siamese suzerainty, to which Patani had long sent tributes.

In asking for the hand of Raja Kuning, the Yang Dipertuan of Johor sailed to meet Raja Kuning’s mother Raja Ungu, the Queen of Patani. The Johor ruler was met by Seri Maharaja Lela at Beruas and as a ‘gift’ to the Queen, the Yang Dipertuan did not beat his nobat within the vicinity of the kingdom of his future wife:


Thereupon the King of Johor set sail. When they arrived at Beruas he refused to allow the royal drum to be beaten. And the king spoke to Seri Maharaja Lela, ‘This is Our present to Our mother.’ And all the time he remained in Patani the King of Johor did not have his drum beaten; he refused even when the Queen asked him to do so. (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, II: 181)

This seeming act of respect could also be conversely seen as arrogance towards the Patani sultanate in a world where territorial boundaries were often marked by the sounds of the nobat (Ho 1991: 7; Andaya 2011: 26). It was also common practice in the Muslim world for travelling rulers to bring along their instruments as a show of royal extravagance but not without creating a commotion. There was increasing rivalry between Patani and Johor in the 16th and 17th centuries as the Malay sultanates strove to fill the power vacuum left by the fall of Melaka. The ruler of Johor’s perceived arrogance was earlier felt by the Queen when he asked to be personally welcomed by her majesty, which prompted her ministers to remark:

Daulat Tuanku, sebenar seperti titah Duli Syah Alam itu, kerana orang Johor itu barang bagaimana pun ia hendak membesarkan dirinya juga. (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, I: 109)

Hail my Lady, it is just as Your Majesty says, for these people from Johor, whatever they do, it is always exclusively for the sake of their own importance. (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, II: 181)

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5It was related by Ibn Batutta that the Sharif of Madina, ignorant of the customs of the 14th-century Delhi sultanate, played his drums (tubul) and trumpets (anfar) while visiting India much to the consternation of the general populace (Farmer 1987).
Nevertheless, the marriage was consummated a few months later and the royal couple sailed back to Johor. The death of Paduka Syah Alam in 1635 prompted the couple to return to Patani where Raja Kuning was installed as the new queen with the title ‘Phra Cau’. After the funeral of her mother Raja Ungu, the Yang Dipertuan of Johor sailed back to Johor and left behind his younger brother the Yang Dipertuan Muda and mother to look after his wife in Patani. It was during his absence that an adulterous affair is reported in HP involving Raja Kuning and the Yang Dipertuan Muda of Johor. The marriage of Raja Kuning and the Johor ruler seemed to have been dissolved between 1642 and 1643 and Raja Kuning eventually married her brother-in-law the Yang Dipertuan Muda. The new husband spent most of his time being entertained by the court dance _tarian asyik_, was soon attracted to one of the singers named Dang Sirat (or Dang Merta). The HP describes the dance as _asyik tarik-tarikan_ which according to Sheppard (1983: 12) literally means ‘absorbed in poetry’ and was traditionally performed in the courts of Kelantan, Pahang and Kedah. The _asyik_ dance of the Patani court was probably from Pahang since it was only during the reign of Raja Ungu, who was married to the Sultan of Pahang that the dance began to be performed. The names of four male musicians and twelve female singer-dancers of the troupe are given in the HP, including three popular songs or dance-stories.

Patronage of the arts was a matter of great pride for Malay sultanates. Besides the _nobat_, the inclusion of the dance into the court shows Patani’s efforts to elevate itself to the same status as Johor or Aceh. Foreign guests were also entertained with the _asyik_ dance, which the English traveller Peter Floris described during his visit to Patani in 1611 as ‘very pleasing to behold’; he had not seen ‘better in all the Indies’ (Moreland 2002: 87, 63). The Johor prince’s fascination with the court dance led to an adulterous affair that ended tragically, and the _nobat_ was at the centre of the whole drama. The dancer Dang Sirat, described as possessing an unpleasant physical disposition, is said to have used black magic to seduce the Yang Dipertuan Muda. She became increasingly bold with her requests and ultimately demanded that she be installed as queen. Interestingly, the Johor prince was also not only advised by his officials from Johor but also the Acehnese, whose sultanate had recently been at war with Johor. In the following passage, it is clear that both Johore and Aceh shared the same installation custom and understood the implications of the drums. The discussion between the Yang Dipertuan Muda and his advisers regarding the installation of Dang Sirat (who asked to be addressed as Encik Puan) is related in the HP:


‘We wish to have her installed in Kedi, even though we would prefer to have Encik Puan installed here in her own house; but this is too near to the main palace and the drum of
Johor would sound discordant with the drum of Patani.’ Then the ministers respectfully reported, ‘In our opinion, if my Lord installs Encik Puan in Kedi, then the Queen’s drum would be matched with the drum of Encik Puan, so perhaps my Lord’s name would be dis-graced in other countries.’ Then the Prince said, ‘In that case where should we have the drum beaten for Encik Puan?’ The Achehnese said respectfully: ‘In our opinion Tambangan is the right place. Even if Your Majesty should wish to build a settlement it could be done there, as many people live near that place. And all the ministers and officers of Patani, those who are fit to be transferred and taken upstream, let us take them upstream with their families to stay with Encik Puan.’ (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, II: 188)

There are interesting points that can be extracted from the story related above. Firstly, there was the ‘violation’ against the Queen by the Yang Dipertuan Muda of Johor, an act that could be seen as more than just a flash of sexual incontinence but an effort at usurping power and consolidating Johor’s influence over Patani. This happened at a time when Patani was politically and economically weak, ruled by a queen who had no real political power. The affairs of the state were run by the orangkaya who had been opposed to her mother’s confrontational policies and it is reported that Raja Kuning was even denied access to state coffers and had to fend for herself. Her vulnerability was taken advantage of by the Yang Dipertuan Muda of Johor and his followers who began to have political ambitions.

Secondly, we see the involvement of Malays from other sultanates in the affairs of Patani; for example the marriage of Raja Ungu and Raja Kuning to the sultans of Pahang and Johor respectively. These alliances would have also resulted in the migration of the sultans’ subjects or officials to Patani where new customs and cultural practices were learnt, adopted and possible marriage relationships established. Then there were the Acehnese among the Johor ruler’s circle of advisers and followers, probably the result of Johor’s earlier reconciliation with Aceh. This shows the need of subjects and officials as part of a political structure to maintain power even though they were in a ‘foreign’ state; in other words there existed a kerajaan within a kerajaan. The Johor prince was also reminded of the importance of a high number of subjects in order to buat negeri (establish a state) and even the families of Patani nobles and warriors could be mobilised if necessary. The ability to command a large number of loyal subjects or followers reflects a raja’s greatness and a measure of his wealth. In a world of constant migration and shifting allegiances, any possible attempt by a competitor to gain political influence through the mustering of subjects must be viewed with grave concern by a ruler. For whatever reason, this fluidity of migration, interactions and shifting alliances in the Malay world to a certain extent helped to construct a kind of overarching Malay cultural identity.

Thirdly, the prince of Johor had a nobat with him even though he was in Patani and attempted to exercise his perceived ‘power’ in installing whoever he pleased. The existence of the nobat shows the need to maintain power in a competitive environment. Anderson (1990: 27) points to some of the more esoteric ways in which rulers in Java emphasised their power through the presence of ‘strange’ and ‘wonderful’ people – clowns, dwarfs, etc. – at their courts. There also appeared to be at least one ‘extraordinary human being’ in the household of the prince of Johor, by the name of Dang Jela. She was the servant of the mother of the Yang Dipertuan Muda and is said to be well versed in sorcery and taught Dang Sirat the art.

This Dang Sirat had been taught magical charms by Dang Jela, who was a servant of the mother of the King of Johore and was one of the prince’s nurses, and it was she whose duty it was to bathe the prince. (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, II: 186)

Both Johore and Aceh knew about the adat istiadat pertabalan (installation ceremony) and its importance in establishing a kerajaan. They understood the concept of the nobat as a ruler’s symbol of sovereignty and power, and the important need to display that symbol. Discussions also focused on the proper demarcation of aural boundaries to avoid the overlapping of the sounds of the nobat. Those from Johore now believed they were superior to Patani, and chose to have their nobat distinguishable (and perhaps louder) than Patani’s in order to jaga nama or save face, and not to incur malu or dishonour. Name and honour are significant words among Malays and royal subjects, and as a show of allegiance they are duty-bound to uphold the nama of their ruler (Milner 1982: 105–7).

The story of Raja Kuning concludes the first part of the HP which deals with the Hulu (Inland) dynasty. The second part looks into the Kelantan dynasty and the third part has a brief summary of all the bendahara who served under different rulers of Patani. Part four of the HP tells the story of Cau Hang the elephant trainer and his grandson Bendahara Datuk Cerak Kin. The activities of Datuk Sai and the bendahara power struggle during the Kelantan dynasty are narrated in part five. There is no mention of the nobat or any musical activities in the four parts above. It is the last section of the HP, part six, obviously written by an expert on court music and customs, that a detailed description and instruction on the nobat is found, which will be analysed next.

**Malay adat and the Patani nobat**

(a) The final part of the HP deals with Malay customs and the nobat ensemble of Patani. By the term adat, one would expect a complete array of court customs, etiquettes or list of ceremonies, but in this case, the main focus of the adat is on the Patani nobat. Apart from HP, there are a number of texts that give some attention to the adat of the nobat, notably: Adat Aceh, Adat Raja Melayu, Misa Melayu and Adat Resam dan Adat Istiadat Melayu (Syed Alwi 1986). Although the Adat Resam is rather recent (first published in 1960), it is based on royal customs from the 19th-century Riau Lingga sultanate with information gathered from surviving members of the royal family. The HP is the only hikayat in the Malay literary genre that has a special section on the adat which is useful in the study of the nobat. The HP text can be divided into (a) a description of some of the regalia, (b) a list and description of the ragam of the nobat, and (c) instruction on how the pieces are to be played.

**Section A: regalia**

The existing instruments in the present Malay nobat ensembles such as nagara or nekara, gendang, nafiri, serunai, gong and kopak are first mentioned in one of the earliest Malay
texts – the *Hikayat Amir Hamzah*. Although a translation from a Persian romance, the author of the *hikayat* described instruments found in the 14th-century Malay world in his narration. There is no mention of the term *nobat* but instruments used in the ensemble above are clearly named especially in the context of war; for example the *nagara*, *gendang*, *nafiri*, *serunai* and *gong* are joined with *ceracap* and *dandi* as part of *genderang perang* or the war drum ensemble. Other instruments mentioned in the *hikayat* include *merangu*, *muri*, *serdam* (wind instruments), *kopak* (small cymbals), *harbab* and *kecapi* (plucking instruments).

In another early text, the *Hikayat Raja Pasai*, the *gong*, *gendang* and *serunai* are named but not explicitly stated as being part of a *nobat* ensemble. A clearer picture can be found in the *Sejarah Melayu* that names the *gendang*, *nafiri*, *serunai* and *nagara* as being part of the *alat kerajaan* (state regalia) that were used in official Melaka court *istiadat*. Thus, these instruments can be said to constitute the basic *nobat* ensemble of Melaka although one, the *madeli* (a type of idiophone), is also mentioned on two occasions. Apart from the *nobat* instruments, others are categorised as *bunyi-bunyian Melayu* (Malay instruments) and differentiated from *bunyi-bunyian Jawa* (Javanese instruments) such as *gendir*, *sekati* and *gambang* (*Sejarah Melayu* 117: 13). This distinction between the two sets of instruments suggests an awareness of a discrete cultural identity among the Malays of 15th-century Melaka.

In the case of HP however, only five musical instruments are mentioned. In addition to the *gendang raya* or big drum, four instruments constituting the *nobat* ensemble similar to the ones found in the *Sejarah Melayu* are named. These instruments are clearly part of the Patani *nobat* ensemble from the 16th to the eighteenth century. This *hikayat* is the only known text that lists an inventory of the *nobat* instruments as part of the state regalia of a Malay court:

Dan nafiri emas empat dan perak empat butir dan serunai emas dua dan perak dua butir dan gendang nobat dua belas butir dan negara delapan butir. (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, I: 144)

And there were four gold trumpets and four silver trumpets, and two gold oboes and two silver ones and twelve state drums and eight other drums. (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, II: 211)

There are more instruments mentioned in this section of the *hikayat* than would be found in present ensembles, and they would be more valuable. This was a reflection of the economic prosperity achieved by the kingdom during the height of its power, but also the value placed on these instruments of power. The description of the regalia in HP, although on a smaller scale, mirrors that of Abu’l Fazl, the Mughal emperor Akbar’s (r.1556–1605) chronicler who detailed the *naubat* instruments of the Mughal court in 1593. Since the demise of the Patani sultanate, no other Malay sultanate is known to have possessed such a lavish set of royal musical instruments. The idea of a large royal ensemble like Akbar’s did not gain wide acceptance among Malay sultanates. The sounds of eight *nafiri* blowing and 20 drums beating traversing the otherwise quiet soundscape of 17th-century Patani would surely have had a tremendous impact on the populace or any foreign visitor hearing them for the first time. Emanating from the source of power, the palace, it truly reflected the majesty of the *kerajaan* and its ruler.
The terms usually used in classical Malay literature to denote a song or musical piece are *ragam* and *lagu*. Etymologically, *ragam* is also used to describe a variety or diversity of things such as food or flowers while *lagu* is closely related to music, especially songs and melodies. In HP the *nobat* pieces are called *ragam*, a term which is still used by *nobat* ensembles. This is more appropriate since *nobat* pieces are instrumental and differentiated by the variety of different drums and drumming styles rather than the melody played by the *serunai*. *Nobat ragam* are cited in a number of Malay texts as part of a narrative or a documentation of a court’s customs and ceremonies. Some of the pieces mentioned are ‘Ibrahim Khalil’ (*Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai*), ‘Gendang Adi Mula’ (*Sejarah Melayu*), ‘Nobat Iskandar’ and ‘Nobat Ibrahim’ (*Syair Seratus Siti*), ‘Ibrahim Khalil’ (*Adat Raja Melayu*), ‘Nobat Iskandar’ (*Syair Siti Zubaidah*) and ‘Nobat Iskandar Zulkarnain’ (*Hikayat Hang Tuah*). A more recent text documenting the 19th-century *nobat adat* of Riau-Lingga (Syed Alwi 1986) lists ‘Iskandar Syah Zulkarnain’, ‘Ibrahim Khalil’, ‘Arak-Arak’, ‘Palu-Palu’, ‘Seri Istana’, ‘Subuh’ and ‘Perang’ as part of the repertoire. Additionally, there is mention of the use of pieces from Perak and Indragiri, but these are unlisted since they are not considered part of the official *ragam*.

All the pieces mentioned by Syed Alwi (1986) are still performed today by the *nobat* of Terengganu, a state geographically close to Patani. Other known texts documenting a complete list of repertoire are the *Misa Melayu*, *Adat Aceh* and HP. Table 1 lists the *ragam* of the Patani *nobat* found in HP:

Compared with the list above, there are several pieces which are similar in name within the existing Perak and the obsolete Melaka repertoires as described in the *Sejarah Melayu*. However, looking at the *ragam* of 17th-century Aceh in the *Adat Aceh*, none of pieces mentioned bears any similarity to Patani’s or indeed any of the existing repertoire in the current ensembles. This may strengthen the argument, related in *Sejarah Melayu*, that the Patani *nobat* originated from Melaka.

Teeuw and Wyatt (1970) found 25 pieces listed in HP. There are possibly five more that are not specifically mentioned in the list: ‘Nobat Isyak’, ‘Perang’, ‘Arak-Arakan’, ‘Nobat Subuh’ and ‘Raja Berangkat’. Teeuw and Wyatt (1970) were unsure if ‘Perang’ was indeed part of the repertoire, resulting from different interpretations of the term:

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**Table 1. List of the *ragam* of the Patani *nobat* in *Hikayat Patani*.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nobat pieces found in the Hikayat Patani</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Adimula</td>
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<td>2. Membetung Gendang</td>
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<td>3. Bujang Alulu Dalul</td>
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<td>4. Dendeng Anak</td>
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<td>5. Jalin Meminang</td>
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<td>18. Mandi Adam</td>
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<td>20. Kepi</td>
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<td>29. Nobat Subuh?</td>
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<tr>
<td>30. Raja Berangkat?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Section B: repertoire**

The terms usually used in classical Malay literature to denote a song or musical piece are *ragam* and *lagu*. Etymologically, *ragam* is also used to describe a variety or diversity of things such as food or flowers while *lagu* is closely related to music, especially songs and melodies. In HP the *nobat* pieces are called *ragam*, a term which is still used by *nobat* ensembles. This is more appropriate since *nobat* pieces are instrumental and differentiated by the variety of different drums and drumming styles rather than the melody played by the *serunai*. *Nobat ragam* are cited in a number of Malay texts as part of a narrative or a documentation of a court’s customs and ceremonies. Some of the pieces mentioned are ‘Ibrahim Khalil’ (*Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai*), ‘Gendang Adi Mula’ (*Sejarah Melayu*), ‘Nobat Iskandar’ and ‘Nobat Ibrahim’ (*Syair Seratus Siti*), ‘Ibrahim Khalil’ (*Adat Raja Melayu*), ‘Nobat Iskandar’ (*Syair Siti Zubaidah*) and ‘Nobat Iskandar Zulkarnain’ (*Hikayat Hang Tuah*). A more recent text documenting the 19th-century *nobat adat* of Riau-Lingga (Syed Alwi 1986) lists ‘Iskandar Syah Zulkarnain’, ‘Ibrahim Khalil’, ‘Arak-Arak’, ‘Palu-Palu’, ‘Seri Istana’, ‘Subuh’ and ‘Perang’ as part of the repertoire. Additionally, there is mention of the use of pieces from Perak and Indragiri, but these are unlisted since they are not considered part of the official *ragam*.

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Bab ini membentung gendang namanya, demikian bunyinya: … maka lalu perang (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, I: 144)

This paragraph deals with the melody called membentung gendang; it sounds as follows: … and then the melody ‘war’ is played. (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, II: 211)

Bab ini jalin meminang namanya, demikian bunyinya: … lalu perang. (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, I: 144)

This paragraph deals with the melody called jalin meminang, it sounds like this: … then war starts (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, II: 212)

‘Perang’ is mentioned twice more in the HP, and again Teeuw and Wyatt (1970) differ in their interpretation of the line below. I am of the opinion that the proper translation of the word diubung dengan perang should be ‘connected to the piece “Perang”’ which makes more sense considering the earlier mention of the piece ‘Perang’ as a continuation from another piece.

Maka diubung dengan perang pula; tiup panjang pula dua kali pandaknya tiga kali … (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, I: 144)

And in connection with a state of war too; again blow long twice, short three times … (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, II: 215)

The Riau nobat in the 19th-century did use the ragam ‘Perang’ to end a piece as documented by Syed Alwi (1986: 82):

Adapun lamanya nobat itu dipalu ialah selama 32 tiupan nafirinya. Setelah itu baharulah pada penghabisannya dipukul gendang perang sebagai penutup.

The duration the nobat is beaten is equivalent to the nafiri being blown 32 times. After this, at the end, the war drum is beaten as the ending.

Furthermore, connecting pieces in a ‘suite’ is a common nobat practice; the Perak nobat, for example, plays a medley of four pieces depending on the duration of a particular ceremony (Raja Iskandar 2009). Again at the fourth occurrence of the word perang, it is translated as ‘war melody’ clearly supporting its existence as a piece.

Sebagai pula tatkala hendak palu perang itu maka tiuplah panjang pula dua kali … (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, I: 144)

When people want to play the war melody, blow the trumpets long twice … (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, II: 215)

Other possible pieces ‘Nobat Isyak’ (HP 92: 4), ‘Arak-Arakan’ (HP 93: 2), ‘Nobat Subuh’ and ‘Raja Berangkat’ (HP 93: 20) are mentioned in HP but are not part of the repertoire. In the case of ‘Nobat Subuh’, there is no specific mention of the piece or even the term nobat, other than the time of subuh (HP 92: 11). It could also be that during this time of the day other pieces were also played without mentioning titles. Nevertheless, there is also a strong possibility that the piece did exist since it is mentioned in conjunction with ‘Nobat Isyak’. Furthermore all four pieces are still to be found in the present repertoire of Perak and Selangor, while ‘Arak-Arakan’ (with slight variations) is found in all existing Malay nobat ensembles. The reason that the other three pieces are not part of the repertoire is unknown.
While the titles of some of the pieces may indicate their functions within a certain context, most however leave us with no clue whatsoever as to their functions or even their literal meanings. No attempts were made by Teeuw and Wyatt (1970) or Siti Hawa (1992) to decipher the meanings of the *ragam*. In looking into the repertoire of the Kedah *nobat*, Ho (1991: 69) argues that some of the titles with no semantic meaning could be cyphers of some sort, ‘designed to conceal or discourage curious investigation’. Comparing the Patani with the Perak repertoire, I would suggest that there are two types of *ragam*: the *lagu tetap* (fixed pieces) and *lagu berpalu* (beating pieces) where *lagu tetap* are fixed or assigned to be performed for specific occasions, and *lagu berpalu* are selected at random based on their suitability during a particular moment. From the list, it can be assumed that certain pieces, based on their given titles like ‘Adimula’ (Primordial Beginning), ‘Dendeng Anak’ (Rocking a Baby), ‘Jalin Meminang’ (Asking for the Hand in Marriage), ‘Mandi Adam’ (Adam’s Bath), ‘Nobat Isyak’ (Drum for the Night Prayer), ‘Nobat Subuh’ (Drum for the Morning Prayer), ‘Perang’ (War), ‘Arak-Arakan’ (Procession), ‘Raja Berangkat’ (The King Leaves) are those under the *lagu tetap* category. These pieces could be used for specific court ceremonies as indicated (or hinted) by the titles.

**Section C: instructions**

The HP also documents how the *ragam* are to be played. It presents detailed technical instructions to musicians of the *nobat* more sophisticated that any other found in Malay literature. A mnemonic system was used to describe the rhythmic patterns and the technical aspects of *nafiri* playing. A variety of long and short patterns are given and repeated according to the need of the occasion, similar to the pieces found in *nobat* ensembles today. The instructions can be divided into those for the drums and for the *nafiri*. However, no instruction is given on how the *serunai* is to be played.

**Gendang patterns**

The HP documents detailed mnemonic syllables for the 25 *nobat ragam*. It is clear here that similar to the Perak *nobat*, pieces are differentiated by the rhythmic patterns or *ragam* and not the melody played by the *serunai*. Syllabic notation is a typical method of learning in societies steeped in oral tradition for aiding the retention of musical information, and drum students normally learn to speak and memorise these patterns before actually playing the instruments. A similar learning method is used in the music of *wayang kulit* and *makyong* in Kelantan. Each of the pieces is given its title and followed by syllables and further instructions, either to repeat (*balik pulang*) or continue with another piece (*terus perang* or straight to the piece ‘*perang*’). As an example, the first piece is explained in the HP as follows:

Bab ini ragam genderang nobat: pertama adimula namanya, demikian bunyinya: kemetang kemetang kemetitang kar kemetetang kemetang lekat lekat tipekab nang kemetang kekerkam tepat tepat tepat. (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, I: 144)

This chapter deals with the melodies of the royal drums. The first one is called ‘Adimula’, and it sounds as follows: kemetang kemetang kemetitang kar kemetetang lekat lekat tipekab nang kemetang kekerkam tepat tepat tepat (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, II: 215)
The syllables of the pieces range from simple three-word *gam gam gemetang* to highly complicated 39-word mnemonics. In the Perak *nobat*, sequences of patterns are normally repeated and are often connected to other *ragam*. In the HP, the only connecting *ragam* mentioned is the *gendang perang*. However these largely onomatopoetic mnemonics do not include rhythmic indications or timing of pieces. We can only speculate, based on the spaces given between the syllables; for example *gam tang* could be played slower than *tepegam* or *tit tang* than *titang*. It is difficult to decipher and reconstruct the rhythmic patterns of the Patani *nobat* due to the large number of different syllables and combinations found. Some of the syllables could have been the same but were wrongly copied especially those involving the Jawi letters க (*kaf* or *K*) and ஝ (*ga* or *G*). So the mnemonic *kemetang* could be *gemetang* and the same with *ger* and *ker*. Siti Hawa (1992) uses (rather inconsistently) the letter ஝ instead of க in many instances for example, *gegergam* instead of *kekerkam*. For this section, I will use Siti Hawa’s edition of the HP which makes more sense considering the close sounding nature of the letters thus reducing what could possibly be repetitions of the same syllable. Except for two, all of the *ragam* start with the first syllable *gem* or *gam* and end with either *gam*, *tang* or *ting*. I will use the ‘a’ vowel instead of ‘e’ in some of the syllables, thus *gemetang* will be spelled as *gametang*. There are five types of syllables found as listed in Table 2.

In order to decipher the onomatopoetic phrases, a comparison with existing *nobat* ensembles is needed. The only surviving Malay *nobat* ensemble with written instructions or notation is that of Kedah. Called *dai*, the notations are indicators or symbols written in the Jawi alphabet and icons mainly to guide drum players, with occasional instructions for the other instruments. There are some similarities between the Patani and Kedah notations, especially the ending syllables used, but we can only speculate as to how the former were performed. In the Kedah *nobat*, syllable *tang* is played by hitting the edge of the drum and *tik*, by nudging the edge of the drum; both are played using the left hand. However, *dam* is played by hitting the centre of the drum using a curved stick in the right hand (Ho 1991: 32). The Perak *nobat* only uses the monosyllables *tik* and *tam* for left and right hand playing. Similar to the Kedah *dam*, the Perak *tam* also denotes the hitting of the right hand using the stick. When shown the HP drum patterns, a musician from the Kedah *nobat* acknowledged the similarities and was convinced that there existed some form of historical connection between the Kedah and Patani *nobat*.7

In the Patani instruction, amid the non-semantic words and phrases, there appears the di-syllable *gegar*, which in the Malay language means ‘shake’. Could this be a special instruction to the drummers to actually shake the drums to produce a musical effect? In the Kedah *dai*, there is an instruction called *guruh* (thunder) in which the drummer would repeatedly play *dam* on the right hand to create a ‘thunderous’ effect. The term *guruh* is not uncommon in describing the sound of the *nobat*, as related regarding the 19th-century Riau custom compiled by Syed Alwi (1986: 69):

> Apabila lepas tiga kali berbunyi tiupan nafiri itu maka berbunyi pula guruh atau ragam nobat itu … .

> After the nafiri is blown three times then the thunder or pieces of the nobat are then sounded … .

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6 *Gam* has a more downbeat feel as compared to *gem*.
7 Personal communication with the deputy leader of the Royal Nobat of Kedah in Alor Setar, August 2013.
Another interesting word that appears in HP is *slui* which is used in relation to the *nafiri*. In the *dai* of the Kedah *nobat* there is a similar word *sloay* which is an indicator to hit repeatedly the centre of the drum with a stick. It is uncertain if these two words are related to each other.

In sum, based on the comparison and the onomatopoetic mnemonics it can be deduced that the syllable *tang* and *ting* are played with the left hand, or without using a stick. This is also similar to the *ting* drum mnemonics of *wayang kulit* and *makyong* drums that indicates beating at the side of the drums to produce a ‘ringing’ tone. Deeper sounds such as *gam* or *kam* could indicate the use of a stick, struck at the centre of the drum. The onomatopoetic *lekat*, *tekat*, *tepat* and *tepit* could mean the dampening or muting of the drums. The different variation of sounds furthermore indicates a possible *menyelang* or interlocking of the drums, similar to the Perak and Kedah *nobat*.

**On playing the nafiri**

The HP offers a remarkable observation of the detailed playing technique of the *nafiri* with musical and technical instructions. In the musical part, players are advised how to play alongside the drums on a number of pieces or during a particular time. Some of the instructions are for general pieces and some are specific. For example the *nafiri* player when playing a piece in which the drum (presumably the *negara*) is supposed to start the piece, has to wait until the first tap is heard. For more specific pieces or time, the HP documents that:

Tatkala nobat waktu isyak itu demikian itu juga mulanya; tatkala turun kepada perangin tiuplah beri lanjut sekali dahulu, sudah tiup tiga kali pula tambah (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, I: 144)

When the drum is beaten in the evening, the beginning should be the same; when it lowers to the perangin [the mouthpiece through which air passes?] give a prolonged blow once, after that give three additional blows. (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, II: 214)

Although the *nafiri* is considered a melodic instrument, it does not function as such within the present context, and is limited to playing single or, in the case of the Kedah *nobat*,

| Table 2 The five syllables found in the *Hikayat Patani*. |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Monosyllabic** | **Disyllabic** | **Trisyllabic** | **Quadrisyllabic** |
| Gar | Lekat | Tep-e-gar | Gam-e-tang |
| Gam | Tepat | Tep-e-gab | Gam-e-tang |
| Gab | Tekat | Gam-e-tang | Tang-gam-e-tang |
| Ter | Tepit | Tep-e-tang | Tep-e-gam-tang |
| Tit | Kemba | Tep-e-gam | Tang-e-tepat |
| Tang | Tang-gar | Ge-gar-gam |  |
| Ting | Geger? | Tang-e-gam |  |
| Nang | Ti-tang | It-e-cu |  |
| Ngat | Tang-kim |  |  |
|  | Tang-gam |  |  |
|  | Tang-tang |  |  |
|  | Gi-tang |  |  |
|  | Ke-tang |  |  |
|  | Kemat |  |  |
|  | Karang |  |  |

24 RAJA ISKANDAR BIN RAJA HALID
three notes (Ho 1991: 30). One interesting point about this nafiri instruction in the HP is the mention of a specific ‘melody’ played by the instrument called ‘Palu-Paluan’.

Sebagai pula, tatkala hari Jumaat tiuplah bersama-sama dengan gendang, tiup panjang dua kali pandak tiga kali panjang pula sekali; tiuplah ragam palu-paluan beri lanjut tiga kali. (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, I: 144)

Another rule, on Fridays we should blow the trumpets together with the drums, blow them long twice and short three times, and then long again once; blow the melody palu-paluan; prolong the blows three times. (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, II: 214)

The only known ragam played by a melodic instrument are found in the Perak nobat, called ‘Merawan’ and ‘Senangin’ and played by the serunai. In the technical part of nafiri playing the ideal sound to be produced and correct technique is as follows:

Adapun tatkala tiup panjang itu demikian bunyinya: uting, beri lanjut serta diketarkan. Tatkala tiga kali ditiuup demikian bunyinya, yang sama tengah itu dilanjutkan sedikit bunyi-nya. (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970: 144)

Now as regards to a long blow, its sound should be as follows: uting, let it be prolonged and let it trill. In the case of three blows let the sound be the same, but the middle one should be protracted a little (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, II: 214)

In the passage above the mnemonic sound of a ‘long blow’ has two syllables u and ting, indicating a use of two notes sliding either down or up. Usually in the Kedah nobat a long nafiri blow begins with a higher note (G5) sliding down to (D5), an interval of approximately a perfect fourth (Ho 1991: 146). In the case of the Patani nafiri, based on the mnemonic syllables, it was likely that it started with a lower note. There is also the use of the word diketarkan which from a musical point of view, more closely resembles the musical effect of vibrato or tremolo.

The following sentences deal with the sounds of another ‘long blow’ and a ‘short blow’ using several extra syllables.

Adapun yang bunyi panjang itu uting ang uting. Adapun yang pandak itu ating ating uting ti u, ujung sekali itu dieret sedikit. Adapun yang lima kali itu berturut-turut senapas senapas. (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, I: 144)

As for the long blow, its sound is uting ang uting. As for the short blows, they sound ating ating uting ti u – the last part should be drawn out a little. As for the five consecutive blows, they should be blown in one breath each time. (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, II: 215)

The aspiring player is further taught how to blow a proper sound using such term as bulat (round) to describe the ideal tone.

Adapun barangsiapa hendak belajar maka tiuplah beri kuat-kuat supaya bulat bunyinya. Adapun memasukkan uting itu dipetik-petik lidah sehabis-habis kuat, maka besar bunyinya; lamun kurang pun kurang bunyinya, demikianlah syaratnya membunyyikan itu. (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, I: 144)

Now anyone wanting to learn to blow the trumpet should blow as hard as possible, so that the sound is ‘round’. If one has to insert [the long blow] uting the tongue should be [moved to and fro] as vigorously as possible, so that the sound be loud. If the blowing is not strong enough, then the sound is insufficient; such is the condition for blowing the trumpet (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, II: 216)
Apart from the need to produce a ‘round’ tone, a student is also advised to use his tongue in order to create an *uting* sound by moving it to and fro. In the Perak *nobat* the term *petik* (lit. snap) refers to the finger movements of a *serunai* player. The use of the tongue and emphasis on blowing strength in playing the *nafiri* is interesting since it mirrors the embouchure technique of brass playing in producing different tones and pitches. Although traditionally limited to a few notes, mostly played as drones, could the Patani *nafiri* have been used to play more sounds and notes? The mentioning of the *ragam* ‘Palu-Paluan’ specifically played by the *nafiri* could very well answer this question. The variety of sounds (and probably pitches) also shows the *nafiri* as playing a more active role in the ensemble than it does today.

**Summary**

The discovery of the HP manuscripts, their romanisation from the original Jawi and later translation into English help enlighten us about one of the most obscure sultanates in the Malay world. There is not much difference in terms of writing style and theme compared to other well known historical literature such as *Sejarah Melayu* and *Hikayat Raja Pasai*. The HP nevertheless provides a chronological narrative of events that is independent of any direct influence from other texts of the same genre and stands above the rest in terms of its historical accuracy and originality; and of course, its musical content.

There are elements of continuity with cultures of the past shown in the retention of Hindu-Buddhist, especially Srivijayan court culture, including art and architecture. Performing arts were used as a symbol of greatness and the *nobat* could have been used to exhibit Patani’s stature in the region, especially to foreign trading powers. This is clear in the description given in the HP of the costly and large ensemble found in the inventory of the court.

The HP is explicit in showing the volatile nature of the sultanate both externally and internally. The authors show no restraint in detailing the seditious nature of the sultanate’s officials and the reckless, condescending manner of those from Johore. These anecdotes underlie the larger narrative of Patani’s continued efforts in maintaining a good relationship with its northern Siamese suzerain while at the same time strengthening alliances with other Malay sultanates. Patani is portrayed as a rising power in the wake of Melaka’s demise, rivalling the contemporary powers of Johor and Aceh, within which emerges scenes of an interconnected world of Malay migrants, merchants, fakirs, princes and nobles that form a unified cultural identity, a sense of ‘Malay-ness’. While Patani welcomed the diversity of Malays from different parts of the archipelago that made up its population, the sultanate upheld its pride and dignity against any attempt to undermine its sovereignty. This is shown in the swift response meted out to the usurping Yang Dipertuan Muda of Johor and his followers.

The *nobat* is central to the *kerajaan* in this world. Although lacking in ceremonial details, the *nobat* is shown in the HP as not just an important component in the running of the state, but an essential one, from marking the time of prayers and religious celebrations and installing new rulers and cannons, to receiving foreign envoys and demarcating territorial boundaries. Like any other Malay polity, the Patani *nobat* as part of the state regalia powerfully sounded out the ruler’s majesty and *daulat*, and was
central to its continued existence. It was a source of power, a measure of a ruler’s name, wealth and prestige. This was particularly reflected in the large size of the ensemble, and the very fact of HP’s documentation of a long list of repertoire with meticulous details provided in the playing instructions. The great financial value of the instruments outweighs present-day ensembles and underlines the wealth and influence enjoyed at the height of Patani’s existence as a regional power. Although not denying the fact that relations were made with other Malay sultanates, Patani seemed to chart its own course in establishing its own cultural identity amid the larger Malay world.

The Melaka empire is largely absent from the HP’s conceptualisations of this world, probably a sign of Patani’s deliberate disassociation from Melaka’s legacy. Patani is a Malay sultanate among the many but a different one. Perhaps ironically then, the Sejarah Melayu clearly states the Patani nobat’s Melaka origin. Historically, the HP does not document the origins of the Patani nobat. But by looking at the repertoires of Patani and Perak (the latter of which is certainly derived from Melaka), we observe pieces with similar titles. Even the Melaka piece ‘Adimula’ mentioned in the Sejarah Melayu was part of the Patani repertoire.

Nor does HP reveal any clue to the later fate of the Patani nobat. The ensemble and other regalia were most likely confiscated by the Siamese after their 1785 subjugation of Patani. Another possibility is that the regalia was transferred to Kelantan, but looking at Kelantan’s present-day court ensemble the gendang besar, there is no semblance of the nobat ensemble described in the HP. Gendang besar is more akin to a makyong ensemble than a nobat and the only aspect that parallels the Patani nobat was the size of the ensemble used during the installation of Sultan Ismail Petra in 1979, involving eight musicians.

The HP, like many other court chronicles, is an immortalisation of various events and customs involving Malay rulers, their families and nobles. This was done for the benefit of future generations, for them to understand, remember and learn from past achievements and mistakes. Despite the mythological origins and miraculous conversions of Malay rulers bestowed with daulat, they are still portrayed as mortal beings that made wrong judgements, lost battles and died miserable deaths. Archaeological evidence and non-Malay records may prove the existence of the rulers of the Patani sultanate but the sight and sounds of the Patani nobat can only remain in our imagination.

Nonetheless it is clear that the court ensemble portrayed in the HP would have produced what Schafer (1994: 10) terms a soundmark, a unique sound that identifies a community, in this case the people of Patani, but also with deep connections to the larger Malay world. The Patani-ness of the sound is evident in the unique titles of the ragam and rhythms documented, but at the same time, its nobat remains identifiable as one among a number of Malay nobat, many of them interrelated through Melaka, from Patani to Riau and Aceh to Brunei. As the centuries roll by, the nobat becomes more and more truly a Malay soundmark. There are hints – the recognition of difference between bunyi-bunyian Melayu (Malay instruments) and bunyi-bunyian Jawa (Javanese instruments), for instance – that this nascent process of identity formation was in part the result of increasing encounters with outsiders, especially Europeans as suggested by Andaya (2001, 2008) – especially looking at an aspiring 17th-century sultanate across the Straits of Melaka – Aceh.
Note on contributor

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*Hikayat Siak*

*Sejarah Melayu*