

Redjang
Ka - Ga - Nga
Texts

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1. Introduction

The only substantial collection of South Sumatran KA-GA-NGA texts thus far published is that of Baron Sloet van de Beele, edited by van der Tuuk in 1868. This monumental collection - with its transliteration and translation of the texts - laid the foundation for the systematic study of the indigenous syllabic script literature of South Sumatra but little further has been done in this direction with the notable exception of van Hasselt's publication of a few Redjang texts in 1881 and Labberton's publication in 1932 of a text on copper plate at the Koninklijk Koloniaal Instituut in Amsterdam.

The texts that I discovered in Redjang country from 1961-63, inscribed on bamboo, buffalo horn and rattan, and written on barkcloth, are here published for the first time. In my view the most important of these is undoubtedly the Bemanai barkcloth chronicle (Text A). This document was only revealed to me on the last day of my 21 month visit to Redjang country, and then by the light of a minute kerosene lamp for the duration of less than one hour: in these circumstances the document could not be fully transcribed and only part of it is presented in this volume.

There are about 180,000 native speakers of Redjang living in the regencies of Redjang-Lebong, North Bencoolen and a corner of Musi-Rawas in South-western Sumatra. In 1962 I counted 417 people who had some knowledge of the KA-GA-NGA script, but most of these were elderly folk. In 1963 evening classes in KA-GA-NGA were being given in several villages by students of secondary schools and universities - foremost among them Achmad Sjaharuddin B.A. of Muara Aman in Lebong, a student of linguistics at the State Islamic Faculty in Jogjakarta, Java. Since 1962 the Department of Culture of the South Sumatran Provincial Government has paid increasing heed to the KA-GA-NGA literature, and has published a brief comparative study of the several South Sumatran syllabaries (Pantjarona 1962, II and IV).

It is noteworthy that whilst the Redjang have a language of their own which is unintelligible to Malays, the language of their KA-GA-NGA texts is Malay. This was clearly the language of literature and documentation and was modelled on the court language of the medieval South Sumatran Kingdom of Melayu.

It has been generally assumed that the earliest written Malay literature dates from the 15th century (Johns 1963:410) and that the greater part of Malay literature until the present century was written in Arabic script. Students of Indonesian literature generally are acquainted with the much earlier works of Javanese and Balinese literature, but from the point of view of purely Malay literature, Kawi, Post-Kawi and Makassarrese (Matthes 1883 - this is essentially a Makassarrese version of the Javanese Jaya Lengkar legend), Lampong (van der Tuuk 1868) and Batak (inter alia the Poestaka Ginting, van der Tuuk's Bataksch Leesboek 1860-61 and Joustra's Karo-Bataksche Vertellingen 1907) texts are in regional languages and must be excluded from the designation 'Malay'. Johns (ibid) states unequivocally that 'there is no surviving Malay work in which Arabic loan words are absent and which is not written in the Arabic script. Yet it is unthinkable', he continues, 'that a Malay Buddhist empire of the magnitude of Sriwidjaya should have been deficient in the arts of literature.' Furthermore, 'certain peculiar features of the earliest Malay texts using Arabic script 'can only be explained by an older tradition of writing in a syllabic script of Indian derivation, similar to that still used in Java. Everything has been lost, however, apart from a few inscriptions and four lines of a poem written in Indian-type characters carved on a stone found at Minye Tudjuh in Atjeh.'

This present collection of Redjang texts, to be amplified later with others from Pasemah, Serawai and cognate Middle Malay peoples, provides both evidence and examples of an earlier Malay literature using an indigenous script. The use of the phrase 'indigenous script' requires some explanation. All three scripts which Redjang have used or continue to use - KA-GA-NGA Arabic and Roman - are alike in having been borrowed from countries to the northeast of Sumatra.

The KA-GA-NGA, however, differs from the Arabic and Roman alphabets in that the Redjang so adapted it to their own needs that it is now a distinctively individual syllabary, although it bears a close relation to the other South Sumatran syllabaries (see Table 2).

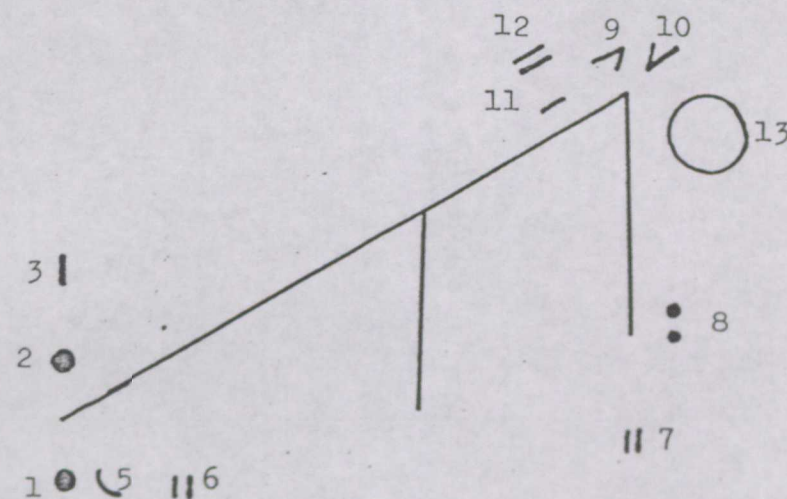
It is perhaps not surprising then that these earliest specimens of Malay literature should come from South Sumatra. After all, Palembang and its hinterland were the centres of the earliest Malay empires, Melayu and Sriwidjaya. Nevertheless, it has not been possible thus far to assign any accurate dates to the texts in this collection, other than that of to the recent letter of Ali Akbar. The aged custodian of the Bemanai clan chronicle claimed that it was inherited from her great-great-grandfather (buluwa pelmong) and there is internal evidence that this may well be so, in which case it probably dates from about the mid-eighteenth century. There are no Muslim names in the text and no mention of Allah. This is in accord with what we know of the Highland Redjang who, at the time of the Dutch military conquest in 1859-60 (van Rees 1860) had not yet been converted to Islam.

Of the other seven texts, only that on buffalo horn is pre-Islamic. The others all contain references to Allah and probably date from the period 1860 to 1900.

This present collection of texts is intended to acquaint those interested in the subject with the nature of the syllabary and the content, language and style of the texts. It is hoped that this preliminary collection will be followed by a further compilation and analysis at a later date.

2. The Syllabary

The Redjang syllabary consists of 23 radical characters of South Indian origin, first published by Marsden in 1783 (See Plate 2). Vowels and terminal consonants take the form of diacritic signs placed above, below or to the side of the radical character. Marsden gave a name for each of these diacritic signs but the names are no longer used.



1	/	ku	8	/	ka', kak
2	/	ki	9	/	kai
3	/	ké	10	/	kar
4	/	ko	11	/	kang
5	/	kau	12	/	kan
6	/	keu, ke	13	/	-k
7	/	kěa, kah	14	/	ka

Figure 1 - A paradigm showing the relative positions of the diacritic signs in combination with the first radical character / (ka).

REJANG ALPHABET.

ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ
 ka ga nga tu du na pa ba ma cha ja na
 ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ
 sa ra la ea ooa hha mba ngga nda nja a.

§ Mark of Commencement. ° Mark of Pause.

The Letters of these Alphabets are governed by a variety of Signs the application of which considerably alters the terminating sound. Those which belong peculiarly to the Rejang are as follows.

* Duo deatas which changes the Termination from..... a to an
 * Cajena or Duo debona changes a to ah
 * Cajoonjoong..... to ar
 * Calonan..... to ee
 * Camacha..... to ay
 | Catoolang changes..... a to ang
 | Cameetan..... to oo
 | Cateling..... to i
 | Catooloong..... to onr
 ʌ ka ʌ kan ʌ kah ʌ kar ʌ kee ʌ kay ʌ kang ʌ koo ʌ ki ʌ kow

The Letters are never joined in writing, each for the most part representing a syllable
 The Writing is from the left hand to the right.

BATTA

ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ
 a ha na ma ra ta ba na sa ga
 ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ
 la pa gua ja da nya u ea oo

LAMPOON

ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ
 ka ga gua pa ba ma ta da na cha
 ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ ʌ
 ja gua na a la m a na ha

The set of diacritic signs can similarly be combined with each of the 23 radical characters, as in the following examples:

Table 1 - The combination of the radical characters (ka pa dja) with diacritic signs

ʌ ka	ʌ pa	ʌ dja
ʌ ku	ʌ pu	ʌ dju
ʌ ki	ʌ pi	ʌ dji
ʌ ké	ʌ pé	ʌ djé
ʌ ko	ʌ po	ʌ djo
ʌ kau	ʌ pau	ʌ djau
ʌ ke, keu	ʌ pe, peu	ʌ dje, djeu
ʌ kēa, kah	ʌ pēa, pah	ʌ djēa, djah
ʌ ka'	ʌ pa'	ʌ dja'
ʌ kar	ʌ par	ʌ djar
ʌ kai	ʌ pai	ʌ djai
ʌ kang	ʌ pang	ʌ djang
ʌ kan	ʌ pan	ʌ djan
° --k	° --p	° --dj

A similar syllabary of radical characters and diacritic signs is to be found among the neighbouring Lembak, Pasemah and Serawai, though with certain minor variations. A concordance of these syllabaries is shown in Table 2.

Table 2 - A concordance of the Redjang, Kerintji, Lembak, Pasemah and Serawai syllabaries

	Redjang	Kerintji	Lembak	Pasemah	Serawai
ka	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ
ga	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ
nga	ㄏ ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ
ta	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ
da	ㄏ ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ
na	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ
pa	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ
ba	ㄏ ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ
ma	ㄏ ㄏ ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ ㄏ	ㄏ ㄏ ㄏ	ㄏ ㄏ ㄏ
tja	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ
dja	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ ㄏ	ㄏ
nja	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ
sa	ㄏ ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ
ra	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ
la	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ
wa	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ ㄏ	ㄏ
ha	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ
m̐a	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ
ngga	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ
n̐a	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ
ndja	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ
a	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ	ㄏ

For the purpose of accurately recording and reproducing ㄏ ㄏ ㄏ texts I began in September 1961 to design a Redjang typescript. This was not a simple task, chiefly in view of the variations in the script from one part of Redjang country to another. Furthermore there are certain morphological differences in the scripts of the various old texts I was able to consult, and more recently, living writers of Redjang prose, such as Ali Akbar of Talang Blau, Masari of Tunggang and Zarchalifah of Talang Leak - have introduced some variations of their own.

The typescript eventually adopted represents a basic adhesion to Marsden's of 1783, but incorporates some of his own later corrections (1811) or alternative renderings, especially where the latter conform closest to present usage. The variations noted in van Hasselt (1881) and Westenenk (1921) were also taken into account in determining the final draft of the typescript.

The first designs from the draughtsmen in Wilhelmshaven, Germany, were submitted to a number of Redjang for their comment, and as a result of this the present typescript was finalised. Table 3 is a concordance of Marsden's 1783 and 1811 syllabaries and mine of 1962. Table 4 compares the equivalent diacritic signs.

Table 3 - The Redjang syllabary showing Marsden's and Jaspan's list of characters

Syllabic character (radical form)			Romanisation	
Marsden 1783	Marsden 1811	Jaspan 1962	Marsden 1783	Jaspan 1962
			ka	ka
			ga	ga
			nga	nga
			ta	ta
			da	da
			na	na
			pa	pa
			ba	ba
			ma	ma
			cha	tja
			ja	dja
			nia	nja
			sa	sa
			ra	ra
			la	la
			eea	ja
			ooa	wa
			hha	ha
			mba	m̐ba
			ngga	ngga
			nda	nda
			nja	ndja
			a	a

Table 4 - A concordance of diacritic signs used by Marsden, Westenank and Jaspan

[in conjunction with the radical character,

Marsden 1783	Westenank 1921	Jaspan 1962
kan	kan	kan
kang	kang	kang
ku	ku	ku
ki	ki	ki
kar	kar	kar
kah	kah	kēal
kau	kau	kau
kē	kē	kē
kō	— ko	ko
kei, kē	kai	kai
—	ka ke ²	ke, keu
—	kok, ko'	ka', kak ³

Notes 1 - Neither Marsden nor Westenank appear to have identified or been able to represent the distinctive fringilised diphthong.

2 - In Pasemah and Serawai.

3 - This represents a glottal stop or hamzah.

= nggāng

(e)nggāng = (Melay) Rhinoceros Hornbill

(Iban) the call made by a Rhinoceros Hornbill.

• sign (on page) = ?

3. The Materials of KA-GA-NGA Texts

Redjang KA-GA-NGA has been produced on and using a variety of materials. The texts already described in the literature (Marsden, van Hasselt, Westenank, Labberton) are on barkcloth, bamboo and copper plate. In addition to these I have seen inscriptions on buffalo horn, rattan, paper and the wooden lintel of a door.

i. barkcloth

As far as I could ascertain, only one of the three kinds of barkcloth made by Redjang was used for KA-GA-NGA texts. This was the variety called te'eup bunut, the barkcloth of the bunut (*Calophyllum* spp.) tree. This cloth is of an off-white colour and is softer and more pliable than that made from natëa (*Crudia Curtisii*?) and te'eup (*Artocarpus Kunstleri*) trees, which is used for blankets, clothing and basket straps. The texts contain an average of 21 syllables per line and are written with a pen (igis) made of the centre blade of a palm frond. Ink is made from either the bark of the lebeu'en (*Vitex Pubescens*) tree which is immersed in a small quantity of water, or from the black berries of the kembang seribu. In the past, according to Marsden (1811:182), ink was 'made by mixing lamp-black with the white of egg'. The Bemanai barkcloth folio consists of 14 folded 'pages' each measuring 24 x 19 cm.

ii. bamboo

All KA-GA-NGA texts other than those on barkcloth - and more recently on paper - are incised or engraved. In the case of bamboo, rattan and horn, the inscriptions are made with the point of a kris, the result producing what is called 'an incised letter' (su'eut knu'i). The precision of the inscription varies with both the material and the skill of the inscriber: there are considerable variations in the quality of inscription on the same

kind of material, whether bamboo or rattan. On the whole the finest and clearest inscriptions are those on bamboo, and the least legible those on rattan and horn.

All the bamboo texts known to me are on a variety called bulua gading or aur gading (*Bambusa Wrayi*), literally 'ivory bamboo'. This bamboo has two qualities which make it eminently suitable for inscription: firstly it has a pale ivory yellow colour which improves with age, and secondly it has a remarkably hard and durable epidermis. This outer layer is not easily damaged or marked and requires an exceptionally sharp and forceful instrument -- such as a kris, dagger or sword point -- to cut it.

The bamboo texts are of two kinds, bamboo tiles or laths (as in Texts C and D in this collection) and whole cylinders or tubes (as in Text B). An average tile text measures 11' x 7.5 cm. and a cylinder 44 cm. with a diameter of 3 cm. The tiles have an average of 8 syllables per line with a range of 5 to 14. The mean number in the case of a cylinder is 32 syllables and the range 27 to 39. In both cases the letters are from 0.4 to 0.5 cm. in height.

One or both margins of a bamboo text are usually decorated with line engravings. The cylinder in Text B has this design on the right hand margin.

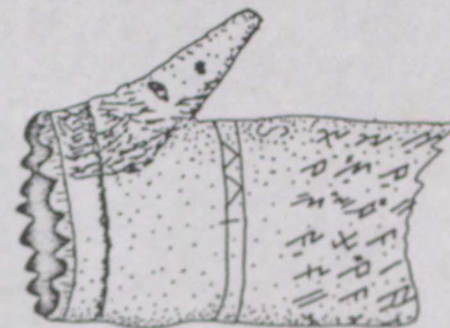


Figure 2