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Christopher Joll and Srawut Aree

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Thai Adaptations of the Javanese *Panji* in Cosmopolitan Ayutthaya

Christopher Joll* and Srawut Aree**

This article considers the curious case study of Thai literary networks in the late Ayutthaya, the networks' adoption and adaptations of the Javanese *Panji* epic, and what these innovations reveal about the form of cosmopolitanism that existed until the late Bangkok period. While windows into what we refer to as Siamese cosmopolitanism have been reconstructed by historians in accounts of Persian, Portuguese, Dutch, French, Chinese, and Japanese mercantile networks, our treatment of this important topic expands the units of analysis to include Thai literary networks. Davisakd Puaksom's excellent doctoral dissertation piqued our interest in *Panji*'s Siamese adoptions and adaptations, but we set ourselves the task of exploring the utility of Ronit Ricci's *Islam Translated*, which analyzes Tamil, Javanese, and Malay sources for Thai studies. We pursue a comparative approach to Southeast Asian historiography in ways that increase the dialogue between Thai studies specialists and members of the Malay Studies Guild. Having described the most important Thai version of this Javanese epic produced by Siamese literary networks from the Ayutthaya through to the late Bangkok period, we consider the principal historical personalities and processes that brought *Panji* to cosmopolitan Ayutthaya. After providing details about the presence of Javanese individuals and influences in both Ayutthaya and Patani, we introduce insights provided by literary scholars and historians concerning the notoriously ambiguous terms "Java/Jawah/Javanese" and "Malay/Melayu." These form the foundation for putting forward arguments about Ayutthaya having fostered forms of cosmopolitanism resembling the fluid linguistic and cultural milieu that flourished in other Southeast Asian port polities.

Keywords: *Panji*, *Inao*, Siamese cosmopolitanism, Javanese, Bangkok, Ayutthaya, Melaka, Thailand

* The Centre of Excellence for Muslim Studies, Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 3rd Floor, Prajadhipok-Rambhai Barni Building Phyathai Road, Bangkok 10330, Thailand; Religious Studies Program, School of Social and Cultural Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, PO Box 600, Wellington 6140, New Zealand
Corresponding author's e-mail: cmjoll@gmail.com

** ศรวิฑูลี อารีชัย, The Centre of Excellence for Muslim Studies, Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 3rd Floor, Prajadhipok-Rambhai Barni Building Phyathai Road, Bangkok 10330, Thailand

Introduction

This article considers the case study of adoptions and adaptations of the Javanese *Panji* epic by literary networks, and what they reveal about the form of cosmopolitanism that once existed in Siam. In recent decades there have been a number of contributions examining the cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity of Ayutthaya from the early sixteenth century. We limit ourselves to the late Ayutthaya and early Bangkok periods, which ended in 1851 with the death of Rama III (r. 1824–51). Historians have provided accounts of Persian, Portuguese, Dutch, French, Chinese, and Japanese mercantile networks with whom various religious entrepreneurs were associated, as well as mercenaries.¹⁾ While studies based on this range of foreign sources and subjects have provided valuable windows into Siamese cosmopolitanism, there is a need to expand the units of analysis within Thai studies. Furthermore, by considering translations of this Javanese epic by Siamese literary networks, we seek to increase interest in “Javanese” and “Malay” actors and influences on cultural, linguistic, and—to a lesser extent religious—cosmopolitanism during this period.

Our awareness of, and interest in, translations of the *Panji* epic by Thai literary networks began when we encountered the excellent doctoral dissertation by Davisakd Puaksom (2008). The decision to specifically consider the role of literary networks in Ayutthaya was inspired by Ronit Ricci’s groundbreaking *Islam Translated* (2011). Ricci points out that there were various networks across the Indian Ocean, which forged connections between a wide range of individuals and communities. While Muslim trading guilds and Sufi brotherhoods played important roles in Islam’s South and Southeast Asian expansion, Ricci argues that literary networks also connected ethnically and linguistically diverse Muslims. This was through the texts they adopted and adapted, which introduced and sustained a “complex web of prior texts and new interpretations that were crucial to the establishment of both local and global Islamic identities.” Islamic literary networks produced “stories, poems, genealogies, histories, and treatises on a broad range of topics” (Ricci 2011, 2). According to Ricci, Javanese, Tamil, and Malay translations of the Arabic text *Book of One Thousand Questions* serve as a paradigm for “considering how translation and conversion have been historically intertwined” and how the circulation of

1) For an analysis of Ayutthaya’s Persian presence, see Marcinkowski (2000; 2004; 2012) and Chularatana (2017). On the French presence in Ayutthaya, see Smithies (1998). Those interested in the Portuguese may consult Smith (2011) and Rosa (2015). Readers wishing to read about the Dutch could consult Ruangsilp (2007) and Borschberg (2014; 2020). On the Japanese in Ayutthaya, see Ishii (1971). For a general treatment of the range of foreigners present in Siamese courts, see Dhirawat na Pombejra (2001).

vernacular translations of Islamic texts such as these helped “shape and maintain an Arabic cosmopolitan sphere in South and Southeast Asia.”

In addition to intentionally moving beyond European contributions to what Edward Van Roy (2017) has referred to as the “Siamese melting pot,” the utility of Ricci’s attention to literary networks to our treatment of Siamese cosmopolitanism is motivated by a desire to contribute to approaches to Thai studies associated with Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit. Besides having produced a series of seminal empirical contributions, conceptually Baker and Pasuk have demonstrated that Ayutthaya was both a maritime city-state that rose from the sea—not the land—and a predominantly urban—rather than agrarian—polity involved in commerce and manufacturing (Baker 2003; Baker and Pasuk 2017c). A corollary of Ayutthaya’s port being critical to its financial prosperity and political power was that it closely resembled port cities in the Malay World. Therefore, we also wish to increase the awareness of Southeast Asian studies involved in a comparative approach to Southeast Asian historiography—specifically between Thai studies specialists and members of the Malay Studies Guild.²⁾

Having clarified our specific objective, and the questions we seek to answer about what translations of *Panji* by Thai literary networks reveal about the cosmopolitan milieu in which they operated, we introduce a mix of empirical and conceptual material. We begin by describing the most important Thai version of this Javanese epic by Siamese literary networks from the late Ayutthaya period. This is followed by a discussion of what we regard as the principal historical personalities and processes through which this epic arrived in cosmopolitan Siam, arguing that waves of “Javanese” influences came to this port polity from various directions before the dramatic increase in Malay prisoners of war following the first campaigns in south Thailand led by Rama I in 1786 (Bradley 2012). After providing details about the presence of Javanese individuals and influences in both Ayutthaya and Patani during the late Ayutthaya period, we introduce analyses by literary scholars and historians about the notorious ambiguity of the toponym “Java/Jawah” and ethnonyms “Malay/Melayu” and “Jawanese/Jawi.” These form the foundation for arguing about the ways that Ayutthaya produced forms of cosmopolitanism that resembled the fluid linguistic and cultural milieu that flourished in other Southeast Asian port polities.

2) Area studies specialists will be aware of publications filling this gap by pursuing an intentionally comparative approach. On synergies between Thai and Malay studies, see Andaya (1999; 2017), Montesano and Jory (2008), Jory and Saengthong (2009), Joll (2011), and Borschberg (2014, 95–145; 2020).

Panji's Siamese Incarnations

This section describes *Inao*, the best-known Thai versions of the Javanese *Panji* epic, produced in Siamese literary networks between the late Ayutthaya and early Bangkok periods.³⁾ The titles of the two most popular Thai versions are: *Inao Lek* (The lesser *Inao*), also known as *Dalang*; and *Inao Yai* (The greater *Inao*). They were composed in Ayutthaya by Princess Kunthon and Princess Mongkut, daughters of King Borommakot (r. 1733–58) (Davisakd 2008, 73). As described below, these Thai literary productions are best regarded as the end product of a series of oral narrations—most of which might have been through (female) storytellers—rather than written manuscripts. As independent and innovative literary creations based on a range of non-Thai sources, *Inao* diverges in several respects from the Javanese *Panji*. Nevertheless, resemblances remain. The following synopsis of the story line is provided by James Brandon:

Prince Inao has been betrothed since childhood to Princess Busba, daughter of his uncle, King of Daha.⁴⁾ Inao, however, has fallen in love with another princess and refuses to carry out his obligation. . . . He goes to live with his new bride at the court of her father [King of Many]. The King of Daha is deeply incensed. He offers Busba's hand in marriage to the first person who requests it. Immediately Choraka [a crude and repulsive warrior] asks to marry her. It is too late for the king to withdraw his rash offer. He is about to order Busba to marry Choraka when the King of Kamankunin appears to press his suit. When told she is already promised to Choraka, the king gathers his army and attacks Daha. Inao [as his nephew] is obliged to come to Daha's defense. He does so, but with great reluctance. He is made commander-in-chief of Daha's armies, and leads the armies to victory. When the king invites him to visit the palace to be honored, Inao cannot refuse. During his visit he sees Busba for the first time. She is ravishingly beautiful. His passion is aroused. He curses himself for having rejected her. He finds every reason he can to remain at the palace. As the day for Busba's marriage to Choraka approaches, Inao falls into deep melancholy. Finally he retires to the forest to compose himself and to gain peace of mind. In time, Inao emerges from the forest strengthened with magic powers. He overcomes innumerable obstacles, finally defeats all his enemies, and makes Busba his bride. (Brandon 1967, 106–107)

Some interesting details about *Inao* provided by Supeena Adler (2014) are that he is a “handsome young king who likes to watch theatre, who has many wives, who wins every war, and has a nonchalant lifestyle.” Topics dealt with in the text include his travels, power, protection from gods, and—most important—his desire to get what he wants.

3) This precludes the introduction of some fascinating material about connections between Siam and Java from the reign of Rama V, or King Chulalongkorn (r. 1868–1910), to immediately after the coup that brought an end to the absolute monarchy, when Prince Paribatra lived in exile in the Siamese palace in Bandung, West Java. For more on this period, see Davisakd (2008, esp. pp. 183–225).

4) Robson notes that the prince also bore the title “Raden Ino,” or “Inu,” which might have been connected with the title “Rakryan i Hino,” referring to a (royal) heir apparent (Robson 1996, 41).

Regardless of the impact of his actions on his family, friends, and palaces, he alone is able to “conquer chaos and bring peace back to the world” (Adler 2014, 85). Given that the story’s narrative arc centers on the royalty, Adler argues that *Inao* communicated what people at the time wanted to “hear about the king’s life,” including the power of the king to “bring back peace.” Notably absent are anachronistic concerns about the often “unacceptable and even unethical behaviors of King Inao.” Indeed, Siamese monarchs are presented as people who can do no wrong. The story had political utility for two reasons: it concerns an administrative union under one sovereign ruler; and the central—and richly metaphorical—motif is the sexual union between the prince of Kuripan and the princess of Daha (Robson 1996, 42).

The popularity of *Inao* in the late Ayutthaya period is illustrated by assertions that King Suriyamarin (r. 1758–67) was so obsessed with *Inao* that in the final stages of the Burmese siege of Ayutthaya he was watching this drama (Adler 2014, 85). How was *Inao* celebrated in literary networks during the short-lived Thonburi (1782–92) and early Bangkok periods? The answer to this question can be provided by scenes from *Inao* being included on murals painted on the walls of royal dwellings. These included projects associated with Princess Thepsudawadi, born in the late Ayutthaya period. She was the elder sister of the first monarch of the Chakri dynasty, Rama I (r. 1782–1809), who commissioned a new version of *Inao* based on his memory; this was completed by a committee of court poets he personally presided over. His manuscript consisted of “9,870 stanzas in *klon* meter” (described below). Stuart Robson (1996, 51) notes that the manuscript included many Javanese and Melayu lexical elements.⁵⁾ A second version of the story was a rather fragmented manuscript consisting of 1,772 stanzas—also in *klon* verse (Davisakd 2008, 44). During the reign of Rama II (r. 1809–24), the publication of another version of *Inao* (not *Dalang*) was undertaken—widely regarded as the best extant Thai version. Court artists such as Sunthorn Phu (a famous poet during the reigns of Rama I through Rama IV) and choreographer Luang Pitak Montri developed *Inao* into a dance drama (Adler 2014, 83). Since the mid-1700s, when it was first performed, *Inao* has enjoyed spectacular success. According to Davisakd, Thai poets commented that after witnessing its “mesmerizing dance,” ordinary men “want to die no more.” Its popularity is, in part, explained by its offering a story of “pleasure and desire,” which contrasted with the morality of “traditional literary works influenced by the Buddhist texts” (Davisakd 2008, 69). Adler (2014, 81) adds that, in contrast with the Thai transla-

5) An example is the change from *Ino* to *Inao*. Robson notes that this change is common in the final syllable of Malay words that have found their way into the Thai lexicon, and that these words are also rendered in a rising tone (Robson 1996, 51).



Fig. 1 Shadow Puppets in *Inao* Mural from Wat Somanat
Source: Davisakd (2008, 144).

tion of the *Ramayana* (*Ramakien*), *Inao* was intimately concerned with the “everyday lives of . . . Thai royalty.” While the reign of Rama IV, or King Mongkut (r. 1851–68), falls outside the purview of the early Bangkok period, scenes from *Inao* could be seen in murals on the walls of the ordination hall in Wat Somanat Rajawarawihara to commemorate Princess Somanat (see Fig. 1 [above] and Fig. 2 [below]). She was not only one of Rama IV’s favorite queens but also a former court dancer (Chonhacha 1995).⁶⁾ The murals juxtapose Thai architectural tropes, Thai dancers, men dressed in Javanese sarongs, and Javanese shadow puppetry.

6) For more on Thai temple murals, including those of Wat Somanat, see Jaiser (2009a; 2009b).



Fig. 2 Cockfighting Scene from *Inao* Mural in Wat Somanat
Source: Davisakd (2008, 66).

Inao's Multipolar Origins

Having provided readers with a brief introduction to *Panji*'s Siamese incarnation, we turn to critically evaluating proposals by historians of Southeast Asian literature about what these literary productions tell us about Siamese cosmopolitanism. It needs to be stated at the outset that our objective is not to pinpoint the origins of *Inao*. To paraphrase Davisakd, this would be a misguided and ultimately pointless project doomed to failure. While no one quibbles with claims that *Panji* originated in "Java," Thai adaptations were based on versions "widely disseminated in oral and written forms throughout Southeast Asia" (Davisakd 2008, 103).⁷ We present material in (roughly) chronological order, beginning with arguments put forward by Brandon (1967) about the agency of Angkor. We make the important point that *Panji* is one of a number of literary works that were incorporated in the Thai literary corpus, and summarize proposals made by Malay and Javanese literary scholars. Debates concerning the origins of *Panji* in Ayutthaya and the cultural identity of actors involved in its transmission will be dealt with in the sections that follow. These will involve discussions of "Malay" and "Javanese" cultural influences between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries in both Ayutthaya and (equally cosmo-

7) On this point Robson agrees, citing slim evidence for contacts between Java and Siam (1996, 51).

politan) Patani (Reid 2012).⁸⁾

We begin by considering the historical personalities and processes through which this Javanese epic was adopted and adapted in Siamese literary networks. Brandon (1967) made his arguments at a time when the ideas of George Coedès (1968) were becoming more popular in anglophone scholarship. Brandon argued that the decline of the performing arts in India from around the ninth century meant that they “contributed nothing” to the development of the performing arts in Southeast Asia. Nonetheless, over the centuries that followed, “dance, music, and drama” all flourished as Indian influences became “assimilated and incorporated into national, and in some cases regional, styles of performance.” These developed in different directions in line with local national culture, but there continued to be a “great deal of contact between the royal courts of this period,” and “theatre of one country [*sic*] often influenced that of another.” For example, in the first half of the ninth century, Jayavarman II—who was raised in the Javanese court—“founded the Khmer empire,” with the assistance of “Javanese artists . . . priests and court officials.” Despite the presence of themes borrowed from other sources, Javanese influence is clearly seen in the temples built by Jayavarman (Brandon 1967, 25–26).

From the fourteenth century, versions of the *Panji* epic became popular in Burmese, Cambodian, Lao, Siamese, and Malay royal courts. This epic therefore represents “one of the most famous local history legends in Southeast Asia.” In Java, Raden Panji was considered a “descendent of the Pandavas, heroes of the Mahabharata,” while on the mainland Inao became regarded as a “future Buddha” or Jataka (Brandon 1967, 106).⁹⁾ Baker and Pasuk, in their *A History of Ayutthaya: Siam in the Early Modern World* (2017a), develop this line of analysis by pointing out that in cosmopolitan Siam *Inao* was one of a number of foreign epics that became part of the literary landscape. In addition to the well-known *Ramayana*, these epics included “the *Anirut* tales from India, . . . the Arabian *Thousand-and-one nights*, the *Duodecagon* from Persia, and a vampire tale from Sanskrit (*Vetala pancha-vinshati*).” Furthermore, vernacular translations were recast to suit their new audience. For example, the *Anirut* that arrived from Cambodia in the early Ayutthaya period was adapted into an “immense epic with greater focus on the love story and the

8) Readers interested in reading about the relationship between Patani and Ayutthaya should consult Watson Andaya and Andaya (1982), Suwannathat-Pian (2012), Andaya (2017), and Baker and Pasuk (2017b).

9) Baker and Pasuk mention that dramatic traditions that developed outside the court (*lakhon nok*) included those based on plots in the *Fifty Jatakas*, and that Thai *Jataka* contain elements absent in the Pali versions on which they are based. Many originated as “folktales, which were adapted into stories of the Buddha’s past lives” (Baker and Pasuk 2017a, 235). For more on Jataka in Thailand, see Jory (2016).

addition of Thai spirit beliefs.” And the *Ramayana* (*Ramakien*) emphasized the role of Hanuman (a clever courtier), not the royal Rama (Baker and Pasuk 2017a).

It has already been mentioned that the *Panji* epic had been adapted to dance and drama performances in the court of Borommakot. *Inao* tended to select episodes that glorified princely success or romantic escapades. Later versions of it revealed what might befall princes who behaved badly. Baker and Pasuk point out that while court and popular literary traditions might have initially been kept separate, they “increasingly borrowed from each other” at three-day festivals held at temples (*wat*). These are described as “open to all social levels, and which was often the staging place for dramas and recitations,” but they were also sponsored by the palace. One festival patronized by Borommakot at three new monasteries in Saraburi included performances of “*khon* mask-plays, *lakhon* dramas, shadow puppet shows, *mongkhrum* drum performances, *rabeng* dances, Mon dances, tightrope walking, jumping through flaming hoops, sword dances, wrestling, and ‘daring acrobatics’” (Baker and Pasuk 2017a, 234). An important detail—mentioned by Davisakd (2008, 47) and developed in more detail by Baker and Pasuk—is that literary works were adapted to a *klon*. A *klon* is a Thai metrical form based on rhythms accompanying the popular Thai tradition of counterpoint singing. Its “simplicity and flexibility” lend themselves to composition and storytelling, especially in comparison to “older, more formalized meters which excelled at expressing emotions.” As such, “before long, *klon* was used for poems, dramas, (and) histories” (Baker and Pasuk 2017a, 235). To summarize, *Inao* was one of a number of literary works adopted and adapted in Siamese literary networks. Most—although not all—were Indic works, and no consensus exists about the route through which the Javanese *Panji* arrived in cosmopolitan Siam. Having presented various proposals of *Panji*’s arrival from Angkor in the east, we now consider arguments for its arrival from the Malay World.

Robson’s analysis of *Inao* (1996) includes a discussion of whether the Thai versions mentioned by Prince Dhani Nivat (1947) were translated from Javanese. There are multiple Thai versions of *Inao* that resemble the Javanese original. There is no consensus on whether these are based on Malay or Javanese manuscripts, and it is likely that, according to Prince Damrong, both daughters of King Borommakot had “Malay maids, descendants of Pattani prisoners of war.”¹⁰ There is no information about where Prince Dhani’s versions originated, but Robson insists that they were transmitted orally. A

10) It is worth noting that in 1685, Chevalier de Chaumont observed the presence in Ayutthaya of both Makassarese and “many people of the Island of Java,” and Malays who were mostly slaves but “quite numerous” (Smithies 1995, 43, cited in Davisakd 2008, 89). This was approximately a century before the arrival of massive numbers of Malay war slaves (Thai *chalei*) in Bangkok following campaigns against Kedah and Patani between the late 1780s and the 1830s (see Bradley 2012).

second story claims that *Inao* was introduced to the Siamese court by a Muslim woman named Yai Yavo—which roughly translates as “Grandma Jawa”—and that this was translated from Javanese into Siamese by Prince Chao Kasat-tri, “for presentation on the stage.” Prince Dhani adds that the “colophon attached to King Rama II’s *Inao*” explicitly stated that it was composed by a *Chao Satri* (noblewoman) during the Ayutthaya period (cited in Rattiya 1988, 44). Can references to *kham chawaa* (Javanese words) in *Inao* be cited as evidence of the text having come directly from a Javanese source? While we address the notoriously imprecise nature of “Jawa/Jawah” and “Malay/Melayu” below, we concur with Robson’s assessment that Siamese literary networks at the time would not have been either “aware of” or “concerned with” distinctions between “Malay” and “Javanese.” *Inao* was “quite unambiguously” set in Java. It therefore seemed logical that “it was taken from Javanese.” Malay *Panji* stories also “abound with words borrowed from Javanese.” As these were produced by Thai literary networks, Robson feels justified in “regarding them as Malay,” although their “distinctive Javanese character” supplied “the appropriate ‘local color’ for a Panji story” (Robson 1996, 44–45).

Krommamun Phittayalap Phrittayakon (following Winstedt [1958]) might have argued that the *Panji* epic came to Ayutthaya during the height of the Malacca sultanate in the fifteenth century, but Rattiya Saleh (1988) addresses the issue of whether that was through oral traditions or written manuscripts.¹¹ Rattiya argues that it was Malays from Patani who functioned as the epic’s principal importers and disseminators (cited in Robson 1996, 48). As described below, if what Peter Floris (see Moreland 1934, 42–43) witnessed during his visit to Patani in 1613 was a performance of *mak yong*, other Javanese materials such as *Panji* might also have been part of the local repertoire.¹² Rattiya’s most compelling contribution to issues of agency is her analysis of the Malay versions of *Panji* that most closely resemble the *Inao* texts attributed to King Rama II.¹³ She concludes that this is not a “translation from any particular text” but a text “adapted from one not among our selected texts, possibly from an older source which was possibly also the basis of some of our selected texts” (cited in Robson 1996, 49). On this point,

11) On the spelling of Melaka/Malacca, Peter Borschberg (2014, 264) points out that in European cartography during the early modern period, the city of Melaka is spelled differently from Malacca, which often referred to the wider Malay Peninsula.

12) Robson adds that during the 1930s in Kelantan, *wayang* was referred to as *wayang Jawa*, and that local repertoires included versions of the *Panji* epic. This was distinct from *wayang Siam*, which drew more on versions of the Rama epic (Robson 1996, 48). For more on *wayang Jawa* and *wayang Siam*, see Scott-Kemball (1959), Sweeney (1972), Wright (1981), and Osnes (2010).

13) These are: *Hikayat Misa Taman Jayeng Kusuma*, *Hikayat Endang Malat Rasmi*, *Hikayat Dewa Asmara Jaya*, *Hikayat Cekel Waneng Pati*, *Kuda Semirang Seri Panji Pandairupa*, *Syair Angreni*, *Syair Ken Tambuhan*, and *Hikayat Panji Semirang*.

Robson concurs. The lack of evidence of direct contacts between Java and Siam means that direct translations between Javanese and Thai need to be discounted.

Without taking a recalcitrant position on whether or not there was contact between Ayutthaya and Java, Davisakd disagrees. He questions why, after risking the “trip across the Java Sea to Melaka or Patani,” Javanese would not have continued on to “prosperous Ayutthaya.” He is equally reluctant to discount Siamese having visited Java: “What would have prevented Siamese from plying the naval routes between Ayutthaya and Java, whereby they could keep an eye on troublesome southern vassals? Why would they not have stayed for a season in Java?” (Davisakd 2008, 95).¹⁴ Returning to Robson, we conclude that in light of differences between (Thai) *Inao* and (Javanese) *Panji*, the former is best regarded as a “new, independent creation, albeit using a theme from a non-Thai source, but at the same time naturalized on Thai soil and hence incorporating much of Thai culture, distinct from Malay or Javanese culture.” In other words, it was the “end-product of a series of ‘receptions’ of the Panji theme” (Robson 1996, 51).

The preceding sections have provided the most important pieces of the puzzle through which a picture emerges of the personalities and historical processes of how *Panji* arrived in Ayutthaya, where it was adopted and adapted in its literary networks. We have identified Khmer, Javanese, and Malay personalities who arrived in Ayutthaya through conquest, and perhaps commerce. Our primary concern below is to describe the cosmopolitan sites of contact and exchange mentioned above. In order to overcome the understandable incredulity about how Javanese or Malay versions of the *Panji* epic could have come to the attention of Thai literary networks in Ayutthaya—especially among those oblivious to the contacts and cultural exchanges among port polities at the time—it is necessary to have a more nuanced picture of Ayutthaya’s cosmopolitan credentials as well as the “Malay” and “Javanese” elements in its linguistic and ethnic landscape.

Malay and Javanese Elements in Cosmopolitan Ayutthaya and Patani

What references to Javanese during the Ayutthaya period exist in the secondary literature? Baker begins by citing claims by Fernao Mendes Pinto (1989) that a squad of Turks attempting to scale the walls of Ayutthaya in the mid-1500s were cut to pieces by three thousand Javanese warriors (Baker and Pasuk 2017a, 94). This is one of the earliest examples of Javanese loyalty to Siamese kings—also shared by the Cham. Muslims were

14) Indeed, Dhirawat na Pombejra has documented material exchanges between Ayutthaya and Java in the late 1680s, specifically Javanese horses and Siamese elephants (2001).

among the foreign fighters who defended Ayutthaya in its final days. The Cham and the Javanese were often contrasted to Makassarese and Bugis visitors, who were mistrusted as potential pirates or mercenaries (Smithies 2002). Indeed, Makassarese were presented as barbaric giants (Thai *yak makkasan*) in Thai literature (Davisakd 2008, 92). Baker's fascinating reconstruction of economic activity in Ayutthaya before 1767, contained in a source discovered in 1925, includes accounts of the annual monsoon season that "blew junks up the river and into the city," which would "drop anchor at the end of the canal." Amidst the long list of vessels are references to "*Khaek* from Java and Malayu" (Baker 2011, 58). When Christoph Carl Fernberger visited Ayutthaya in 1624, he counted "six Javanese sailboats" (Lukas 2016, 129).

Although the vast majority of surviving literary works from the late fifteenth century (such as the Luang Prasoet's chronicle and law codes) were written in Thai, Pasuk and Baker (2016) point out that this was "not the only language" present during the Ayutthaya period. For instance, many religious texts were written "in Pali using a Khmer script," translations of which were "extemporized during sermons by monks reading a Pali excerpt and then expounding in Thai." This was facilitated by Pali-Thai notebooks compiled by monks. In Thai temples, "monks used an argot of verbs and nouns derived from Pali, Sanskrit, and Khmer for everyday actions and things," and "diplomatic correspondence between Siam and Lanka" was written in Pali (Baker and Pasuk 2017a, 205).

We have already mentioned Baker's (2003; Baker and Pasuk 2017c) important reconceptualization of Ayutthaya as an urbanized port city involved in Southeast Asia's maritime trade. It also shared the linguistic, cultural, and religious cosmopolitanism of ports such as Melaka, Surabaya, and Batavia. An important detail that has only recently received the attention it deserves is that the most important *lingua franca* in Ayutthaya was Malay. Particularly after the fall of Melaka to the Portuguese in 1511, Portuguese diplomacy with Ayutthaya was conducted in Malay.¹⁵ Later, in 1595, there was "a Malay letter sent from the Portuguese governor of Melaka to Naresuan" (Baker and Pasuk 2017a, 205). Davisakd (2008, 84) adds that the letter from Dutch Stadholder Prince Frederick Henry to King Songtham (which arrived in 1628) was "translated from Dutch into Portuguese, from Portuguese into Malay, and from Malay into Siamese," which at the time was "the usual procedure." Baker and Pasuk also speculate about whether the local career of the (in)famous Greek adventurer Constantine Phaulkon (1647–88) got off to a good start due to his facility in English and Malay—to which he "quickly added Portuguese and Thai." The entourage that accompanied King Borommakot on his mission to Sri Lanka to revive Buddhism in 1753 included Malay translators (Baker and

15) For more on this Iberian mission in the early 1500s, see Van Roy (2017, 42–43).

Pasuk 2017a, 205). We finally note that the online publication of the archive of the Dutch East India Company, or Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC), includes no fewer than eight diplomatic letters exchanged between Batavia and Ayutthaya between 1674 and 1769—all of which were in Malay.¹⁶⁾

In addition to Malay, and other languages primarily associated with Buddhism, there were other elements in Ayutthaya's cosmopolitan linguistic landscape. Despite difficulties in determining the exact number, Baker and Pasuk recount Dutch accounts confirming the presence of interpreters for “dealing with the court,” and that the VOC employed “informal intermediaries” skilled in “several languages.” Furthermore, a “Portuguese mestizo, a Mon, a Javanese, and a Chinese” helped mediate the crisis between the VOC and the court in 1636–37. The Portuguese was “one of the Berckelang's people” in the service of the Phrakhlng minister.¹⁷⁾ The Javanese was a wealthy merchant in the service of the Kalahom (Department of Defense). The Chinese was probably an interpreter in Phrakhlng. The Mon was Soet, “a low-born woman who acted as an all-purpose liaison between the Dutch and the court” (Baker and Pasuk 2017a, 205). According to Davisakd, the linguistic aspects of Siamese cosmopolitanism described above explain why Javanese and Malay terms remained untranslated in the versions of *Panji* produced by Siamese literary networks. Translating them would have been deemed unnecessary as Malay functioned as one of Ayutthaya's primary *lingua francas*. These terms represent linguistic artifacts present at the “moment of exchange in which economic commodities and cultural elements were bargained, bartered, and traded through the medium of Melayu” (Davisakd 2008, 86, 88).¹⁸⁾

There are more mentions of Javanese presence and influences in Patani during the Ayutthaya period.¹⁹⁾ For instance, in 1556 King Chairacha (r. 1534–47) summoned Raja Muda of Patani to assist in his campaign against the Burmese. A flotilla of two hundred

16) “Diplomatic Letters 1625–1812.” For diplomatic letters between the VOC and Ayutthaya, see Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia and The Corts Foundation (2016).

17) Phrakhlng was the Ministry of External Relations and Maritime Trading Affairs (Breazeale 1999, 5; see Ruangsilp 2016). “Berckelang” was the Portuguese term for Phrakhlng.

18) On the topic of not all foreign words being translated in multilingual Southeast Asia, it is worth noting that the copy of *Panji* tales from Kelantan translated by R.O. Winstedt was estimated to have been composed in the 1780s. While written in “excellent Malay,” it contains “many Javanese but few Arabic and no Portuguese loanwords” (Winstedt 1949, 54).

19) Before addressing the issue of the presence of Javanese in Patani during the Ayutthaya period, Robson points out that while Sai, Kelantan, and Trengganu are all listed in *Desawarnana* (composed for the Majapahit royal court in 1365), Patani is not. In its place is the toponym Langkasuka, which suggests that at the time Patani had not yet been established (Robson 1996, 44–45). For more early Javanese references to parts of present-day Thailand and the Siamese Malay States before the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909, see Robson (1997).

boats sailed to Ayutthaya as instructed. Upon arriving, the intruders discovered that the Burmese had retreated. This led the raja to mount an (unsuccessful) attack on the weakened Siamese forces. Upon receiving news of this engagement, an unnamed “Ratu of Java” attacked Patani. Nevertheless, his troops arrived after the return of the raja, meaning that the Javanese were wiped out. Another force led by the ruler’s “most successful general” was sent to Patani, but that was also repelled (Fraser 1960, 25).²⁰ The *Hikayat Patani* describes another attack from Palembang that occurred in either 1549 or 1563 (see Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, 88–90).²¹ Intriguingly, this involved a conflict between two Palembang-based Javanese noblemen. Despite being military commanders, these men were referred to as Kyai Badar and Kyai Kelasang. Equally striking was their “use of Javanese words,” such as *paseban* (audience hall), *manira* (I), *ḡakanira* (you), *lawang seketeng* (outer gate), and *rabi* (wife).²² A. Teeuw and D.K. Wyatt conjecture that Malay readers of the *Hikayat Patani* might have been familiar with these terms through local performances of *wayang* (shadow puppetry) or “literary texts containing Javanese *wayang* stories.” Both were hugely popular along the east coast of the peninsula in the sixteenth century.²³ Furthermore, the quarrel between the *kyai* is reminiscent of scenes common in *wayang*. There are other references to the attackers being Javanese from Palembang (*ra’yat Jawa Palembang*). Whether this refers to language, origin, or affiliation, the *Hikayat Patani*’s description appears to stress their Javanese characteristics (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, 239). An unflattering journal entry by Floris in August 1613 mentions attending a performance by Malay women of a Javanese comedy (perhaps a *mak yong*) (Moreland 1934, 97). Slightly later, during the reign of Raja Biru (r. 1616–24), the *bendahara* (a powerful position in the Malay palace, analogous to the vizier in a European court) was a “Javanese of the family of the sultan of Mataram” (*anak Jawa bangsa sultan Mataram*) (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, 79). Finally, by the beginning of the seventeenth century, the number of Javanese slaves in Patani, who might have been descendants of captured soldiers, was significant enough for them to attempt a (failed) rebellion (Moreland 1934, 94–95).

What is the relevance of these insights provided by historians of littoral and mainland Southeast Asia to reconstructing the personalities and processes through which Siamese literary networks adopted and adapted the *Panji* epic? This epic is likely to have arrived

20) Fraser cites Wood (1933, 19).

21) The most important treatments of the *Hikayat Patani* include Wyatt (1967), Siti Hawa Haji Salleh (1992), Bradley (2006a; 2006b; 2009), and Porath (2011).

22) This is also mentioned by Robson (1996, 47).

23) The decorated boats that the east coast of the Thai/Malay Peninsula was famous for included characters from not only the local *wayang* repertoire but also the *Panji* epic (Coatalen 1982, 86–99).

from more than one direction. Although it could have been introduced by the Khmer as early as the turn of the second millennium, most commentators cite members of the Siamese court receiving oral traditions passed on to them by “Malay” or “Javanese” servants. Although these female storytellers would have arrived in Central Thailand more than a century before the dramatic rise in the number of Malays from 1786, little has been written about Javanese and Malays in the Ayutthaya period. More anecdotal evidence about military and artistic interactions between Java and Patani between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries can be gleaned from primary and secondary sources. The important—but often overlooked—issue of how “Jawa/Jawah” functioned as toponym and ethnonym, and what the ethnonym “Malay/Melayu” denoted, is the subject of the following section, which explains the confusion or lack of interest in the ethnic identity of the aforementioned storytellers in the Siamese court.

Malay and Javanese in the (Confounding) Southeast Asian Cosmopolitan Soup

Given that Adrian Vickers (2004) does not consider any case studies from Thailand, what is the relevance of his revisionist scholarship on the ethnonyms “Malay” and “Javanese” to our investigation of Thai adaptations of the “Javanese” *Panji*? First and foremost, his proposal about what “Malay” and “Javanese” did—and did not—denote are based on his analysis of texts produced in a range of Malay and Javanese literary networks (Vickers 2004). Vickers demonstrates ways in which the study of literary texts confirms the complex and ambiguous characteristics of ethnonyms such as “Melayu/Malay” and “Javanese” and the toponym “Jawa/Jawah.” Neither of these can be adequately defined without reference to “literature, geography and language” and interactions provided by European visitors to the region. Like others offering a range of circumstantialist alternatives to primordial perceptions of Malayness, Vickers criticizes attempts to separate “Malay” from “Javanese.”²⁴ Not only does this run against the grain of “indigenous discursive fields,” but the “colonial reconstitution” of these ethnonyms is inseparable from the “reconstitution of the term ‘Java.’” Both Malaysia and Indonesia might represent “invented traditions,” but none of these were “invented from nothing” (Vickers 2004, 26). We add that Malay was a category that was frequently combined with—or used alternately with—Javanese. “Malay” and “Javanese” were ethnonyms commonly employed in descriptions of littoral Southeast Asia, yet both denoted *hybrid* identities

24) Adrian Vickers is one of a number of scholars who have argued that until the late nineteenth century, the ethnonym “Malay” was a “fluid category” (see also Barnard 2004; Milner 2008; Joll 2011, 66–75; Maznah Mohamad and Syed Mhd. Khairudin Aljunied 2011).

formed through “combinations of antipathies and interchanges predating the one-way street view of late nineteenth century colonialism” (Vickers 2004, 32).²⁵⁾

Another important detail complicating an already confounding cultural conundrum is ambiguities about how “Jawa/Jawah” functioned as both toponym and ethnonym. No one denies the presence of Javanese in Ayutthaya during the early Ayutthaya period. Nonetheless, not only are references scant and evidence often anecdotal, but Java and Javanese could also be referred to in a number of ways. Anthony Milner comments that the related ethnonym “Jawi” is encountered in regions where Muslim populations are found. These include present-day Cambodia, where Muslims are referred to as Chvea—a local derivation of Jawah. This community claims long-standing and close connections with Patani and Kelantan, where people are also frequently referred to as Jawah or Jawi (as well as Melayu).²⁶⁾ Milner adds that in Cambodia, Chvea may also refer to the entire Malay community regardless of place of origin. Although encompassing people from the island of Java, Chvea also includes populations from “various islands of the Malay Archipelago or the different states on the Peninsula” (Milner 2008, 90).

British observers in the late 1700s were familiar with the land and people “beneath the winds” (*de-bawah angin*)—a toponym as imprecise as “Jawah” (Milner 2008, 96–97). As a toponym, “Jawah” encompassed Sumatra and possibly Borneo, but English observers in the late seventeenth century occasionally also referred to the entire archipelago as “the Javas.” Similarly, Chinese captains referred to Malacca and Patani as part of Jawa. However, when employed specifically as an ethnonym, “Jawah” could denote Acehnese, Bugis, Malays, and other groups in mainland and littoral Southeast Asia—as well as Javanese. This did not escape the attention of Snouck Hurgronje (2007), who famously commented that in Arabia, “Jawah” denoted all people of the Malay “race.” In addition to this, the term’s geographical breadth spread to Siam, Malacca, and even New Guinea. Intriguingly, it sometimes referred to Southeast Asians who were not Muslims, a detail dealt with by reference to “Jawah Meriki,” which specifically referred to “genuine Javanese” (Hurgronje 2007, 248).

Vickers claims that maintaining dichotomies between literature and history represents one of the “most potent of the positivist legacies, dominating the majority of works in the field” (Vickers 2004, 35). He considers the case study of Malay communities in Ceylon who not only “produced their own literature” but also “copied and maintained some of the standard ‘classics’ of Malay literature.”²⁷⁾ Studying the works produced by

25) For a discussion of colonial discourse in Southeast Asia during the nineteenth century, see Noor (2016).

26) On Jawi in South Thailand, see Joll (2013) and Le Roux (1998).

27) For more on the intriguing case of Sri Lanka’s Malay diaspora, see Ricci (2012; 2013a; 2013b).

this literary network calls into question assertions about the presence of some sort of “pure ‘Malayness’ outside the area usually designated as the Malay world.” For instance, the subject of *Hikayat Raden Bagus Gusti* was one of the famous Wali Sanga of Java. At the time the British took control of Ceylon, this diaspora community was referred to as Malay; the previous Dutch overlords had referred to them as Javanese. Nonetheless, from “photographs, the costumes, kris and music” of the period, it appears that this community embodied a “mixture of Malay and Javanese styles” (Vickers 2004, 40, 41).

While Vickers (2004, 44) makes no references to either Malay or Javanese specifically in Siam, he demonstrates ways in which the analysis of texts produced by Southeast Asian literary networks supplies unexpected insights into “links and parallels between the cultures of the archipelago.” These include the similarities between Malay and Javanese *Panji* narratives provided above. Between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, what “Malay” and “Javanese” referred to as ethnonyms and what “Jawa” denoted as a toponym remained fluid. In the 1800s European “high imperialism” froze these into “strict and exclusive categories.” Nonetheless, despite attempts at freezing and standardizing these terms, they did not operate as either exclusive or separable (Vickers 2004, 54). This explains—although not entirely excuses—the widespread confusion in the secondary literature about the roles of “Javanese” and “Malay” in introducing the *Panji* epic to the palace in the late Ayutthaya period.

Conclusion

What do the curated empirical and conceptual materials discussed above reveal about the characteristics of the Siamese cosmopolitanism that existed when the “Javanese” *Panji* was translated into Thai? What is the utility of expanding the units of analysis to include the products of Siamese literary networks, and interrogating “Javanese” and “Malay” agency in both Ayutthaya and Patani? Far from representing some sort of cultural anomaly or outlier, we argue that literary productions of this nature suggest that Siam took a number of pages out of Melaka’s (highly successful) playbook following the latter’s demise in 1511. The most important standard operating procedure was that Melaka fostered the cultural and linguistic cosmopolitanism that had been so good for business. Michael Feener (2010) summarizes the scholarly consensus, describing Melaka as a “cosmopolitan port city located at a key point on the straits between Sumatra and the Malay peninsula.” As such, it became a “thriving hub of commerce, in which Muslims from all around the Indian Ocean rim and beyond came together with non-Muslims from all across Asia and Africa in exchanges of ideas and social practices, as well as commercial

goods.” Tomé Pires’s description of this port’s “polyglot merchant population” in the early sixteenth century is well known:

Moors from Cairo, Mecca, Aden, Abyssinians, men of Kilwa, Malinidi, Ormuz, Parsees, *Rumes*, Turks, Turkomans, Christian Armenians, Gujeratees . . . Merchants from Orissa, Ceylon, Bengal, Arakan, Pegu, Siamese, men of Kedah, Malays, men of Pahang, Patani, Cambodia, Champa, Cochinchina, Chinese . . . Moluccas, Banda, Bima, Timor, Madura, Java, Sunda, Palembang, Jambi . . . Pase, Pedir, [and the] Maldives. (Pires 2005, 268, cited in Feener 2010, 485)

The port produced many polyglots as male merchants married local women in port, and many “streams of Islamicate civilisation” fused with local influences—as well as those from China (Feener 2010, 486).

The spread and diffusion of Melaka’s Malay “Islamicate” culture accelerated after its fall to the Portuguese. While Baker has argued that—along with Aceh and Patani—Ayutthaya was a maritime port city, we add that it profited and prospered from Melaka’s demise. In ways that resemble Pires’s account, one of the most widely cited descriptions of Siamese cosmopolitanism that developed from the early sixteenth century is that of Chevalier de Chaumont, written during his visit to Ayutthaya in 1686. This includes the assertion that “There is no city in the East where is seen more different nations than in the capital city of Siam, and where so many different tongues are spoken” (Chaumont 1997).²⁸ Baker and Pasuk note that such an assessment was shared by many of Chaumont’s contemporaries, and that this cultural fluidity was a result of the “gradual accretion of peoples in a port-city over three centuries” (Baker and Pasuk 2017a, 203).

Engseng Ho, who has studied Southeast Asia’s “expanding and interconnected diasporas” that impacted port polities throughout the archipelago, identifies “expansive social formations” previously perceived in “fragmentary, partial and disconnected ways.” Furthermore, the “entire archipelago” resembled a crossroad where merchants enjoyed the freedom to change (linguistic repertoire and religious affiliation) where they congregated (Ho 2013, 146–147, 151), for example, a certain Pieter Erberfeld, whom Feener describes as a “baptised German Siamese Eurasian.” Some years after his conversion to Islam in Ayutthaya in 1721, Erberfeld and his associates were executed in Batavia, with their heads displayed on pikes. Their crime was distributing “Islamic religious amulets containing Arabic script formulae (*jimat*) and plotting to put an end to VOC control by slaughtering the Christian population of Batavia” (Feener 2010, 495). Feener notes that this convert was one of hundreds of “polyglot, highly mobile and eclectic individuals” who proliferated across Southeast Asia during this period. This case study is noteworthy for a number of reasons. It reminds us that religiously motivated violence

28) Cited in Baker and Pasuk (2017a, 203–204).

by European converts to Islam is far from a new phenomenon, and also—more important for our purposes—that a wide range of transcultural individuals moved between Ayutthaya and Batavia.

However appreciative we might be of what historians, archaeologists, and linguists have contributed to the picture of Siamese cosmopolitanism, we argue for the need to both expand the units of analysis and pursue comparative approaches to Southeast Asian historiography. We have also demonstrated the utility of Malay studies to Thai studies specialists seeking to make sense of Javanese and Malay agency in Ayutthaya. There have been empirical and conceptual elements to arguments about what the adoption and adaptation of *Panji* reveal about Ayutthaya's linguistic and cultural milieu, as conceptual innovations lacking empirical ballast will not float very long. There are many ways that scholars can respond to forms of ethnolinguistic and ethnoreligious nationalism in both littoral and mainland Southeast Asia. Trawling the archives and conducting fieldwork between Thailand and the Malay World provides plenty of evidence that fostering cosmopolitanism is not only a sign of strength but also good for business.

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