

Malalongké

EXPLORING THE 'LOST' ARCHIPELAGO



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CENTRE FOR
TANAH RUNCUK
STUDIES

Malalongké

EXPLORING THE 'LOST' ARCHIPELAGO

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EDITORIAL

Initially, for some experts, talking about Tanah Runcuk is like merely pissing in the wind. What is the relevance of reviving Tanah Runcuk in a scientific debate?

Some scholars have regarded it as the fairy tale of the colonialists who “failed to move on”. Some other groups even comprehended Tanah Runcuk as a science-fiction enthusiasm like the story of Atlantis. While within the rest—regardless of the fact that some people even never heard of this name at all—was entrenched a great curiosity; it encouraged the attempt of tracking and arranging the rubble of this very story originating from the “lost” land.

Tanah Runcuk that used to be a subject of intense debates among the scholars, is getting more interesting to be discussed again due to its being within an in-between space. Between presence and absence, between fiction and reality, between fantasy and history. Precisely, Centre for Tanah Runcuk Studies intends to read the discourse of Tanah Runcuk which occupies a realm between myth and science with the approaches of art project and interdisciplinary study. Instead of drawing a conclusion and producing a single interpretation, this effort expects to open a dialogue and alternative entry in approaching the discourse of Tanah Runcuk (which is by time scraped out from our collective memories).

The name “Malalongke” as the title of this publication is taken from “Malalongke Pacah” mantra in Tanah Runcuk. In Bahasa Indonesia, the meaning of “Malalongke” is somewhat equal to “The Sacred-Divine”. This publication is composed of some writings by researchers and scholars from various disciplines. In the first publication, several involved writers are researchers and/or scholars with experiences in the fields of

art, culture, media, anthropology, architecture, and geography. The process of the research will surely be continued along with the development of findings and methodologies, as well as the data which Centre for Tanah Runcuk Studies remains looking for.

To discuss and uncover Tanah Runcuk in its relevance with the dynamics of current discourses, Malalongke is divided into three main sections. The first section, “Entering through Another Door: Exploring Tanah Runcuk through a Comparative Record”, traces the presence of Tanah Runcuk through alternative records/data resources (from more ancient period), without necessarily relying on Stern and Wallach’s findings in their expedition in Tanah Runcuk. In the second section, “Legacy of the Forgotten Land: Memoir of Tanah Runcuk”, some senior researchers of CTRS attempt to re-examine and interpret Stern and Wallach’s ethnography. Also in this section, CTRS team conducted some data processing, and translated it into a series of visualization upon Stern and Wallach’s records written in the period of 1863-1871. In the last section entitled “Arranging the Mosaic of Tanah Runcuk: Critiques and Comments”, CTRS team invited two commissioned researchers to write down their critiques of and comprehensions on the data and studies of Tanah Runcuk developed by CTRS. By opening such a participatory space and dialogue, it is expected to be able to expand the spectrum of Tanah Runcuk studies.

Long Live Culture!

Berkeley, 25 October 2014

Prof. Dr. Lukman Sudjatmika, M.Si
Director of Centre for Tanah Runcuk Studies

Who is Ludwig Stern?

Beatrice L. Jingga, M.Hum

Ludwig Stern II or Ludwig Stern (1833-...) is the successor of Ludwig Stern I, a prominent Ashkenazi-Jew-descent coffee trader who was quite influential and respected in Hamburg, Germany in the period of the mid-19th century. His father's coffee company had supplied coffee commodity (particularly from the Dutch East Indies) to Prussian regions, through a Dutch coffee middleman named Droogstoppel. It was within Droogstoppel's residence in Lauriergracht 37, Stern used to live and learn about the ins and outs of coffee trade.

During his residence in Lauriergracht 37, he once met Syaalmann (or well-known as Max Havelaar, a former colonial official of the Dutch East Indies commissioned to work in Lebak Regency) with the help of Droogstoppel around 1859/1860s. It was recorded in Max Havelaar's autobiography, that Havelaar (or Syaalmann) used to present a gift to Droogstoppel in the same period when Stern was entrusted by his father to learn about coffee trade. It was through that very gift from Syaalmann to Droogstoppel that Stern started to experience some encounters with documents and archives (particularly about coffee trade) from the Dutch East Indies—which later would light his passion and enthusiasm of adventure to the land in the far east.

From Stern's diary, it is revealed that within the gift given by Syaalmann to Droogstoppel he found (or surreptitiously took away) a package of ancient cruise navigation map of Netherland- Rundjuq, as well as the map of an island known as Tanah Runcuk.

It is discovered recently that the Ancient Cruise Map of Netherland-Rundjuq was a map created in secret by a VOC cartographer named Johannes van Witsen in 1780 (the late period before VOC was officially disbanded). Unfortunately, according to the note of Sam Bergmann published in the



Ludwig Stern (1833-...)

The son of a coffee trader coming from Hamburg who challenged his own guts to explore the ocean in the search of “Tanah Runcuk” in 1863. The first ethnographer succeeded in recording Tanah Runcuk comprehensively, notwithstanding his typical orientalist naivete.

There were intense debates and discussions among the experts who looked back in his travel literatures. Stern’s writing and report were considered too fantastic, and not empirical. However, along with the development of method and approach conducted by Centre for Tanah Runcuk Studies, Stern’s records were eventually feasible of being a reference for data sources and the materials that opens up (again) the discourse of the presence of Tanah Runcuk that was scraped out from our collective memories.

(Archive of CTRS)

Journal of Apollo-Historia (vol. 37, 1993:62), this map was declared missing in the middle of the illegal trade of antique goods after the World War II.

Three years after his encounter with Max Havelaar in Lauriergracht 37, Stern finally took a great decision that later would change his life. Stern decided to leave the world of coffee trade, and performed his first cruise to Tanah Runcuk (Rundjuq), equipped with a package of map from “Syaalman” that he found when he was in Lauriergracht 37. In this first journey, he took a companion, Kreuzer Wallach, a childhood friend and at the same time a teacher, a Frankfurt based ethnographer.

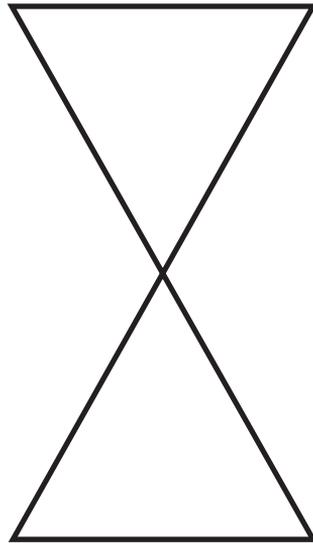
It was recorded that Stern conducted the journey to Tanah Runcuk twice. His first trip with Wallach was conducted in 1864, and he came back by himself in 1871. No record can be found on Wallach’s presence, he seemed to be gone after the first trip to Tanah Runcuk. Some investigation (departing from Stern’s manuscript—without any counter data) referred to the conjecture that there had been a conflict between the two. Wallach was predicted not completing his trip, then he settled in Tanah Runcuk, with all his network and close relationship with colonial government and local elites.

Stern’s second journey to Tanah Runcuk was around 1872-73, only one year after his return to Germany. Subsequent to his return to Germany, he put himself in exile in Weimar for a certain period of time. Stern took a note that he encountered a burdensome experience, and a hard strike as well by his dispute with Wallach in Tanah Runcuk. The memories and unfinished journeys in Tanah Runcuk called him again in the end, that finally Stern decided to travel therein once again.

Stern was lost in his second journey to Tanah Runcuk. No record can be found on his latest journey. Some speculations indeed came up: Was his ship sunk in the middle of the journey to Tanah Runcuk? Was he dying in Tanah Runcuk? Killed by wild animals? Cannibalised by the outback tribe? Going insane? Or like previous prediction, was he affiliated with the despotic colonial government in Tanah Runcuk instead?

Entering through Another Door

Exploring Tanah Runcuk
through a Comparative Record



Windu Jusuf, MA
Rio Belvage, S. Ant

Chateaubriand, Trauma of Rundjuq, and Letters from Penang

Windu Jusuf, MA

Introduction

Chateaubriand, frequently known as the Father of French Romanticism, used to write about Tanah Runcuk. The story was started when he joined French ocean expedition team in 1790. This encounter would have never been figured out if in 1961 some French literary critics and historians did not have a debate about three pieces of letters that were just discovered in a library in Penang around the same period. “Francois”, the writer of those letters, was quickly identified as Chateaubriand. While Rundjuq, as the place referred to in the first letter, until the polemic was over, remained unknown. Here is the speculation: Rundjuq is the name of a place in Southern part of the United States in which Chateaubriand once visited.

These letters, known as “Letters from Penang”, were published in 1969 by publisher Gallimard, in Chateaubriand’s chrestomathy: *Oeuvres romanesques et voyages*. Hitherto, there has been no extensive discussion on what Chateaubriand called as “Rundjuq”. Unfortunately, Chateaubriand himself did not write in detail how his stopover looked like. However, in conjunction with the discovery of ethnographic records on Runcuk written by Ludwig Stern and Kreuzer Wallach on the Land in Weimar, the discussion on “Rundjuq” seemed to find the silver lining.

This writing does not intend to discuss the state of Chateaubriand’s presence in Tanah Runcuk that still needs a further research. Instead, this writing discusses the content

of the Letters from Penang, within which Tanah Runcuk was presented as a geographical imagination of the writer who connected it to the experience of a European man being far away from his homeland within the period of a political upheaval.

Glimpses of Chateubriand

“Chateubriand! What pictures do not rise before us with this sonorous name? A magnificent series of attitudes and of costumes. A child-dreamer, in the tickets near an old castle. A young French officer among the red skins, among the charming savage-women, in the virgin forest. A book that opens the church-doors and sets processions in motion. Moonlight, the indeterminate haze of the forest, the amber odor of crocodiles. A writer jealous of Napoleon’s glory. A royalist who serves the king with the most disdainful loyalty. A deaf old man near the armchair of an old lady, beautiful and blind. A tomb in the rocks of the sea.”

M. Jules Lemaitre

In the 20th century, France had someone like Andre Malraux: a novelist, a humanist, and a minister in the era of de Gaulle who wrote about the history of art. Chateubriand was Malraux of the transition from the 18th to 19th century. Both were raised by great political turmoils of their age; Malraux by the Spanish Civil War and the revolution in Tiongkok, while Chateubriand by the French Revolution. Both went for adventure at a great distance out of France and wrote their travel testimonies and memoirs. Both also took a sharp turn in their political lives, from symphatizers of progressive ideas into the conservatives: Malraux served as the minister of culture under the reign of de Gaulle, meanwhile Chateubriand who was disappointed with the French Revolution turned to support the monarchists—and in the end Napoleon. Born in Saint-Malo, in southwestern France, on 4 September 1768, François- René de Chateaubriand was often titled as the person who spawned the Romanticism of French literature. Chateubriand’s style of speech, content

of writing, and adventurous life style contributed to shape French literary traditions throughout the 19th century until the early 20th century, from Hugo to Proust. His magnum opus is *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe* (*Memoirs from Beyond the Grave*), the 42-volumes memoir published after the author's death, between 1848 and 1850. Other works published in his lifetime were among others short novels *Atala* and *René*, two religious pamphlets *Genie du Christianisme* (*The Genius of Christianity*) and *Les Martyrs, ou le triomphe de la religion chrétienne* (*The Martyrs, or the Triumph of Christianity*). It was through these works Chateaubriand pioneered a new tradition in French literature in post-Revolution era, particularly through memoirs.

Many of French barons enthusiastically supported the Revolution, but later they became discontented when it was entering a more radical phase. There was no exception, even for Chateaubriand, who was born within a marginalized aristocrat family. In 1790, he decided to go for a sail to several places—the one recorded is America—and just set foot in France two years afterwards. His homecoming soon continued to an episode of war: he joined a troop of Royalist armies in Colbenz (now part of Germany), aiding the remnants of the Bourbon Dynasty to fight against the Revolution from the frontier. Due to the extremely gruesome defeat, Chateaubriand fled to England, where he embraced English literature.

When the French Directory was ousted and Napoleon ascended, many former supporters of the Revolution enlisted therein, including Chateaubriand who, after receiving amnesty, went back to his own country. Napoleon, who was organizing his authority, was astounded by Chateaubriand's work, *Genie du Christianisme*, a pamphlet that defended the Church in the middle of increasing sentiment upon Catholic Church. It was said that this work contributed to the rise of the Catholic Church after the Revolution.

Hence, Chateaubriand thrived into a political adventurer up to his advancing years. He used to stand side by side with the Royalists during the Bourbon Restoration era, when he once occupied the position of an ambassador in Prussia and England; but he also switched to the liberal opposition when the ultra-Royalists dominated the government.

Chateaubriand passed away in July 1848, a month after the citizens of Paris overthrew the Orleans monarchy which was also brought up by Chateaubriand. His last letter says

“In my three careers respectively, I have always carried great tasks for myself: as an adventurer, I consistently wanted to explore a new world; as a humanist, I have attempted to rebuild religion from its rubble; as a statesman, I strived to establish a representative monarchical system, with varying freedoms it might offer; and in the end I took part in conquering the freedom that had shifted all other freedoms ... the freedom of the press.”¹

French Revolution in Tanah Rundjuq

Chateaubriand’s letters found in Penang were the letters published during the era of the French Revolution, which further conduced to European political correspondence in the following centuries. In that turbulent times. “... wherever the eyes could see outside the fence, men and women immediately saw bayonets lining,” the critic George Steiner wrote.² Frietzche mentioned that the habit of writing letters and memoirs reflected a massive culture shock in the time when changes took place rapidly in a daily basis, since both were considered compatible with the need to deliver the sense of ‘here and now’ at the time “the entire human race confronted a great disaster or exploitation and plague.”³ It can be said that, letters—and memoirs—functioned as what photography would do in the later centuries: it recorded the social reality with all its distortions of the restless author.

Stephan noted that the volume of mail delivery in Europe increased significantly in that era.⁴ Considering the literacy rate, the most common case was well-documented correspondences, namely the letters of the aristocrats and haute bourgeoisies whose contents were complaints upon uncertain situations and daily anxieties, such as the scarcity of primary need goods in the market—or frequently, letters about secret contracts on the

1 François-René de Chateaubriand, *Chateaubriand : Mémoires d'outre-tombe, tome 1 : livres 1 à 24*, Gallimard, 1947, p. 1031.

2 George Steiner, *In Bluebeard's Castle: Some Notes towards the Redefinition of Culture*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1971, pp. 12-13.

3 Peter Frietzche, “Chateaubriand’s Ruins: Loss and Memory after the French Revolution,” *History and Memory*, Vol. 10, No. 2, Fall, 1998, p. 104.

4 Heinrich Stephan, *Geschichte der Preussischen Post*, Berlin, 1959, pp. 613, 630.

smugglings of coffee, sugar, and bread. In the latter case, most of those letters were dated Ventôse in the second year⁵, when the policy of General Maximum was in force.⁶

Another well-documented letters were the correspondences from outside of Europe. It is necessary to notice that the letters neatly stored in archives were the letters sent to Europe, instead of the ones from Europe to the explored land⁷. Just as the expedition notes of the sailors, these letters became the sources of anthropological researches in their time, where many anthropologists described certain society without even once met the people they wrote about.

Some writer-philosophers such as Voltaire, Montesquieu, and particularly Rousseau frequently utilized these correspondence sources as the raw materials of their didactic scripts (e.g. *L'Ingénu*, *Confession*, *Lettres persanes*), specifically to construct non-European mythical characters with wise, sapiential, and more civilized images than the Europeans.

Letters from Penang contained those elements.⁸ Addressed to Mme Desbaresdes, Letters from Penang are basically long love letters, reporting the experiences of a journey, the longing for a woman to whom the letters were addressed, and also the experiences during some layovers. Mme Desbaresdes was Chateaubriand's youth lover who was revealed just recently. Desbaresdes, a Hungarian noblewoman, was the wife of a French marine assigned in the Mediterranean Sea.

The two last points, longing and experiences of layover in a certain place, were critical parts in the Letters from Penang. Sainte-Beuve stated that the two parts informed a gradual conversion process from the young Chateaubriand who was optimistic and drifted by the turmoil of his time (the French Revolution), to the old Chateaubriand, a pessimist and opportunist—even though he was still a supporter of the Revolution and the Reign of Terror (*La Terreur*) had not been established at the time he went back to France. His political discontentments within the Letters from Penang

5 In French First Republic's Calendar which had been applied since 1792, the period of Ventôse ranged around 19-21 February until 19-21 March.

6 Alfred Soboul, "Robespierre and the Popular Movement of 1793-4," in *Past & Present*, No. 5, May, 1954, p. 62.

7 Heinrich Stephan, *ibid.*

8 Sainte-Beuve, Charles-Augustin, *Chateaubriand et son groupe littéraire sous l'Empire*, Garnier, Paris, 1861. pp. 243-4.

can be compared to an excerpt from a chapter of *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe*, titled “Danton – Camille Desmoulins – Fabre d’Églantine”:

“The Jacobin were plagiarists; even when they beheaded Louis XVI, such action imitated the death penalty upon Charles I. Since viciousness had known to be attached to a great social movement, it was often mistakenly imagined as the result of the Revolution’s grandeur. In fact, such viciousness was a mere cheap imitation: in a wondrous yet ill nature, the passionate or systematic souls only admired the shocks.”⁹

Considering the relationship between the author’s cultural background and what he wrote, the Letters from Penang were part of a tradition that recorded how the changes of perception upon the eastern world shaped by the author finally provided a sort of mirror into which he could see his being Europe and the progress within himself. In the case of Chateaubriand, the Letters from Penang talked about what it meant to be a European, middle-class citizen, with all fear and other typical psychological tendencies, in a certain distant place at a certain period of time.

Rundjuq in the Letters from Penang

Ironically, Chateaubriand only encountered the first period of the Revolution and he perceived the impact just recently. He caught up with the progress in Paris through a routine correspondence, including the letters sent by Mme Desbaresdes. It is where the theme of longing becomes the key point. On one hand, the revolutionary process he assisted from afar raised his worry about Desbaresdes’ safety. It was from those expressions of longing, the description of the places he visited (in the first letter) found its significance. Chateaubriand invited his lover to live in Rundjuq, which he mentioned only twice, solely in the first letter.

9 François-René de Chateaubriand, *ibid.*

“Madame Desbaresdes, the weather in Rundjuq is intensely hot. You are going to writhe like a lizard. Rundjuq will certainly amaze you. We will see a Caribbean-skinned Colossus and a European soul mingling with the tropical comeliness.”

In Sainte-Beuve’s explanation, these lines show young Chateaubriand’s greenness, who in his adulthood was more known as a big-time Don Juan. In terms of his erudition, wit, and seduction skills implied within these letters, it was different from, let’s say, his famous correspondences with Mme de Duras or Mme de Staël in the future, when Chateaubriand was more mature and his political attitude far more conservative¹⁰. However, his talent of having scandal with high-class married woman, description on adventures in a foreign land, and cynicism had been obvious within the letters. Chateaubriand’s view reports could merely be a part of his flattery. However, even as a flattery, it had a palpable utilitarian function: by exposing his adventure in a foreign land, Chateaubriand wanted to show a self image which was entirely in contrast with Desbaresdes’ husband’s nature: Chateaubriand the adventurer, Chateaubriand the supporter of the Revolution, and Chateaubriand the aesthete who was capable of appreciating non-European cultures—a certain mode among French intellectuals.

The first letter found its resonance at least in two other works of Chateaubriand, the short novel *Atala* (1801) and *Genie du Christianisme* (1802). *Atala* was written, according to Chateaubriand’s claim, based on his journey to a remote land in southern America, to be exact Louisiana, where his encounter with “civilized” Indians was narrated. In his unique statement, Chateaubriand told that his stopover was “the true former city of Chartage”. He wrote: “We used to own such a passion of these indigenous and we will have it once again in the twilight of Louis Capet¹¹...” and it was ended with an excerpt from Rousseau’s work, *Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*, “Nature is the only thing capable of radiating absolute human virtue and independence out of the tyranny.”

However, there were some strong arguments that annulled the author’s claim based on the absence of proof that Chateaubriand

10 Sainte-Beuve, *ibid*,

11 The dynasty that bred many European kings, queens, and noble people, established by Hugh Capet. The last kings reigning in the pre-Revolution era came from Bourbon Dynasty, not Capet. However, in the Revolution era, it was common to call the enemies of the Revolution as “Capet’s descendants”.

once indeed travelled to the place he wrote. Moreover, the background of the story he uncovered in *Atala* was no longer unique in its age. Just as many authors in his time, it was typical of the 18th century persons to find their wisdom through the imagination about non-European society. It can be seen from the poor detail as well as the lack of specific nuance of natural landscape and culture. Instead, the authors of the century paid more attention to the narration of subjective experiences whose setting just currently changed into the non-European foreign land. Summarizing the tendency of exoticism in his fellow Romantic authors' imagination, the novelist Victor Hugo said: "In the age of Louis XVI, they were all Hellenists; now, we are Orientalists." Thus, despite the debate on whether Chateaubriand was indeed once in Louisiana, the descriptions of place and society in *Atala* were more proper to be considered as the aestheticization of Chateaubriand's personal experiences instead of the references of a concrete situation he truly encountered.

There is a possibility, that the voyage to Tanah Runcuk—instead of his layover in the Continent of America—contributed building blocks for *Atala*. Still within his first letter, Chateaubriand narrated the culture of Rundjuq people as wise and literate, tolerant, as well as living a belief similar to monotheism. Chateaubriand repeated the discussion on the latest matter in *Genie du Christianisme*, an apologetic pamphlet that defends the truth of Christian religion, neither from a theological perspective nor scientific one, but through an aesthetic reasoning. The phrase "*du Nouveau Monde*" was written in the end of the letter in order to emphasize "a new beginning" that automatically reminds us of the myth of human genesis. He also put more insistence with the phrase "*La nouvelle France*" ("New France"), opposing to "*La vieux France*" ("Old France").

Being read along with Chateaubriand's life story in the later days, particularly at his homecoming to France and supporting Napoleon, the first part of Chateaubriand's letters described a hope of revolution from a distant place on one side, while on the other side, suggested the seeds of reconciliation between Chateaubriand and the monarchists. From the fantasy about the foreign land, Chateaubriand situated a pastoral scenery with peaceful citizens, as the resolution of the conflict in Paris.¹²

¹² Kadish, for example, stated that this motive is the most prominent in Rousseau's novel, *La Nouvelle Heloise*, where nature acted as the one that reconciled and upheld society's productivity. See Doris Y. Kadish, "Symbolism of Exile: The Opening Description in *Atala*", in *The French Review*, Vol. 55, No. 3,

At the same time, it is also important to notice that the expressions referring to nature and a life in harmony were in fact—even in the years towards 1789—developed by the revolutionaries (instead of the Reactionaries) for the sake of translating abstract political ideas such as *virtu* (political wisdom), Human Rights, and Republic into natural terms.¹³ Such articulations were also used to fight against the monarchy absolutism whose legitimization was manifested into Christian expressions, where—as formulated by the monarchy theologian, J.B. Bossuet—the authority of the empire had four basic characteristics, namely “holy”, “paternal”, “absolute”, and “guided by reason”.¹⁴

What makes Chateaubriand exceptional is that he utilized this ‘natural articulation’ to fight the Revolution in the future, precisely by affirming that nature is a double-edged sword; it restores humans to their primitive nature which is kind but yet frequently reveals their ferocious nature, that can only be subdued by the authorities of king and church which—as implied in *Genie du Christianisme*—were rooted to and gained their strength from the nature instead of reason

The “Death” of Chateaubriand and the Contribution of Tanah Runcuk

Trying to find Chateaubriand’s complete description on the land he called Rundjuq is futile. Most probably, it exists. But considering the intervals of three or four months between the three letters, it is clear that there are several missing letters. The second letter was even interrupted in the middle.

“Not long after we got back from the remote land, came the hearsay that the horses were dead. I am clueless about how much those horses were worthy. You know, the horses are more precious when they are dead. They deserved to die. Men of Rundjuq process horse’s heart for their ritual, and fight over its head that is unable to find anywhere for
[manuscript interrupted]

February 1982, p. 359.

¹³ Marisa Linton, *Choosing Terror: Virtue, Friendship, and Authenticity in the French Revolution*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013, pp. 37-39.

¹⁴ J-B. Bossuet, *Politique tirée des propres paroles de l’Ecriture sainte* (1709). Bossuet’s script cited here was published in the compilation of *Bossuet: Book III*, Librairie Droz, Jenewa, 1967, pp. 70–1.

Barberis predicted the presence of external pressures that caused some missing or interrupted letters.¹⁵ Gouhier mentioned an internal influence within Chateaubriand; it was probably malaria or opium consumption that was common—and celebrated—among the creative process of French poets of the following century.¹⁶

However, Barberis also added an important note by comparing some Chateaubriand's paragraphs to the motives of the 'journey to the remote land' commonly found within colonial travel literatures. Fear is prominent within those letters.¹⁷ According to Barberis, Chateaubriand met "his fellow", a Dutch man named Pieter (in other line he called him Pierre) who had been living in the remote land for a longer period of time. The information on how such a mysterious figure was present therein is unclear. The second letter says:

"In the end, Pierre fathomed what was truly happening upon him—and only at the very end he could do. But the wild executed a vicious vengeance towards him for entering the remote land. The jungle whispered things about him he was unaware of, opaque matters that he eventually demanded for advices from such an outright loneliness—and the whisperings were proven to be fuddling."

Bizarrely, Chateaubriand imagined himself like a man nearly insane and moribund in Rundjuq, who then regretted the state of being far away from his own land. Praises for Rundjuq were no longer there. Word by word, it got more intense and less lovely compared to the first letter. The name Pieter/Pierre could be a mere parable representing all white people (similar to John Doe or John Smith in English language), that actually referred to somebody or himself instead. Such imagination of a nearly insane and moribund self is very typical of Chateaubriand, particularly throughout his memoirs. He was obsessed with death and the conviction that his writings (especially the memoirs) would exceed his death. In his essay "L'immortalité mélancolique", Jean Starobinski wrote:

"Denial of life for the sake of a personal work is the peak of narcissism. The misery on the bed of death upholds the

15 Pierre Barberis, *Chateaubriand: Une réaction au monde moderne*, Paris, 1976, pp. 219, 300-301, 305-6.

16 Jean Gouhier's opinion, quoted in Barberis, *ibid.*

17 Barberis, *ibid.*

dreams of consolation on the fragility of the effort to survive through writings. Simultaneously, this moribund style is a way to protect one's self from death, which is by approaching the limits. The eternity that Chateaubriand dreamt of was hiding behind the mourning clothes.”¹⁸

Later, Chateaubriand indeed once wrote in *Memoires*, “*Mais j'ai les cheveux blancs; j'ai plus d'un sibcle, en outre, je suis mort;*” (“But my hair is gray, I age more than one century, and moreover, I am dead”).¹⁹ The description of consolation through a narration on death just appears clearly in the third letter, when Rundjuq is missing from within. He only wrote a brief clue on what he planned to do after his homecoming. But in the second paragraph, it is said that:

“It had been nearly a year of my residence in this foreign land before the lovers of the death shoved into the coast. Now, far I have been from those ghosts, after plunging myself to Hell, the memory of worms slithering on the Kokytos river bank withered²⁰: they completed the dreams of my life, and their names were written on my diary behind the door of the tomb.”

It has been mentioned before that there might be other letters written between the first and the second letters, and between the second and the third as well. What remains vague is the details of events the author might tell about his layover in Tanah Runcuk. However, the changing content, tone, and use of metaphor within the letters seem to allude to Chateaubriand's traumatic experiences in Tanah Runcuk—and such trauma is related to his encounter with Pieter/Pierre who had changed his perception on many things.

As what have been mostly recorded, the contract between the people of Tanah Runcuk and foreigners has been a familiar thing since the presence of trade.²¹ Chateaubriand himself acknowledged the comeliness of the creole race (mixed race) in the first letter. But the explanation on how the two parties—the

18 Jean Starobinski, “L’immortalité mélancolique,” in *Le temps de la réflexion* 3, 1982, p. 248.

19 Or, as written in his memoir publication contract, Chateaubriand stated: “as an exchange to a direct payment as much as 156 franc and a lifetime allowance, I sold my property rights over *Memoires*, as they are, and as they would remain after my death.” See François-René de Chateaubriand, *Oeuvres complètes*, Gallimard, Paris, 1965, p. 435.

20 The name of a river in hell, as narrated in the Bible.

21 See, for example, Ludwig Stern & Kreuzer Wallach: “*Per Fidem Intrepidus*”, Collection Archive of Center for Tanah Runcuk Studies, 2014.

white people living in that remote land and the descendants—were related each other was absent in the letter. Examining this motive of death in accordance with Starobinski's interpretation, it is unrisky to say that the figure of Pierre/Pieter is an imagination of self, a twin, or a *Doppelgänger*, created by Chateaubriand to illustrate an episode of his life that was vibrant but then dead.²² Chateaubriand also gained a new selfhood identity, a 'new man' who managed to elude death and barbarism, who always reiterated death in order to insist on his disconnectedness from the past. Regarding Chateaubriand's political career as an opportunist, in the end he indeed performed as a new man every time the regime changed.

A drastic change of his perception of self occurring in Rundjuq also turned significant because Chateaubriand's loss was at once a loss over an ideal image of the virgin land he used to praise within the first letter. Such discontentment was rooted to an excessive conviction over an ideal figure of society whom the restive people of France should learn from. Therefore, it was reasonable that at his homecoming to Paris while witnessing guillotine everywhere, the experiences in Rundjuq became his primary reference immediately. In other words, the episodes of Tanah Rundjuq had armed Chateaubriand with a pair of new eyes to look at his own homeland.

Rundjuq, as a metaphor of a New World as well as a geographical truth, was a disappointment for Chateaubriand. Such disappointment was completely developed within the narration about white people becoming king/god in the remote land, for instance in *Heart of Darkness* (Joseph Conrad, 1899). The figure of Pieter as the author's mirror in the foreign land also reversed what had been a trend in French literature, particularly after the publication of Montesquieu's work, *Lettres persanes* (Persian Letters). In *Lettres persanes*, non-European people acted as innocent characters whose wisdoms were greater than the European. In Chateaubriand's work, the reversal reads: European people would be more barbaric when they live in a non-European land.

22 Starobinski, *ibid.*

Tracing Southern Orang Runcuk from the Lontar¹ Archive of Qing Dynasty's Legacy

Rio Belvage, MA

Introduction

The historian Mee Ong lately found a pile of archives that are assumed to be the legacy of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) while conducting a research in Hepo plateau (usually called Hoppo) in Jieyang. Those archives consist of pieces of *lontar* inscribed with Chinese letters and unrecognized scribbles that are predicted as letters from other land.

The *lontar* were found wrapped in a cloth within a damaged wooden chest worn out by time. Some parts that can be saved were studied by Mee Ong who then collaborated with a philologist named Zarkelijk. After a course of radiocarbon dating (used to determine the age of an organic material) and philological examination, it is revealed that the unrecognized scribbles inscribed on those *lontar* originated from the late 17th century and have similarities with the form of letters inscribed on Orang Runcuk's slates whose existence remains mysterious for some people, particularly for the researchers working in the Centre for Tanah Runcuk Studies (CTRS).

¹ A kind of palm-leaf manuscripts used as writing materials in Indonesia and some other Asian regions.

According to temporary translation of those *lontar* that Mee Ong and Zarkeljik managed to proceed, the largest *lontar* reads as follows: “about a group of men who are unvirtuous, foolish, and lagged behind”. Meanwhile, on the other *lontar* those Chinese letters are interspersed with equations in numbers. By this time, numerous hypotheses have been posed in order to figure out the actual function of those numbers in the past.

In spite of the pros and cons of the finding and the methodological lacks that remain being acuminated in the next process, what Mee Ong has dicovered is certainly very valuable in completing the course of history from the side that has not been intensively studied during the researches conducted by CTRS. Therefore, departing from Mee Ong and the philologist’s finding as well as other archives, I tried to rearrange the description on the history of Orang Runcuk who resided in the Southern Zone, especially in the age of transition from hunting and gathering to agricultural tradition.

The History of the Southern Zone People

As a small group known to be accustomed to agricultural activities, Orang Runcuk in the Southern Zone may be categorized as subsistence farmers in terms of modern economic development. The settlement flanked by Tanaujung Volcano and Pacakgilo Volcano was a land with certain fertility level that enabled human to survive by gathering plants and grains for food. Compared to other groups of Orang Runcuk living in the other area, where most of them still went for hunting and gathering as well as carrying out swidden agriculture as the main sources of life necessities, the technology developed by Orang Runcuk in the Southern Zone had been far more sophisticated. Such progress was not unreasonable. There had been some myths that attached the life of Orang Runcuk in the Southern Zone to their economic activities, before a group of blond men came and introduced themselves as *Societas Tanaruncia* (a sort of antecedent government in Tanah Runcuk).

Orang Runcuk in the Southern Zone had the proper abilities to conquer the malignancy of the volcano and utilize the fertile soil such as by making terraced fields that might be classified as more advance than other groups outside the zone. Such abilities might be traced back to the Yangtze River valley in China. Because of its ceaseless stream, the river is known as one of the longest rivers in China and Asia lying about 6397 km long, that ends in Mount Tanggula in Qinhai to the Tibetan Plateau. On the history of Orang Runcuk agriculture will be reviewed further in the section of agricultural civilization.

We are back on the history of Orang Runcuk in the Southern Zone. From the *lontar* being studied by Zarkelijk, the equations in numbers that were initially assumed as merely scribbles turned out to lead to conclusions that assisted one another. Those numbers were strongly suspected as the proof of trading transaction, a kind of contract of sale in the past. Thus, Mee Ong believed that there had been a contract of sale between Chinese citizens with the remote areas of Huangci².

If what Mee Ong adduced is true, it means that the civilization of Orang Runcuk was much more advanced than what has been imagined so far. The pieces of *lontar* found by Mee Ong originated from the range of time when the Dutch fleet boarded by de Houtman brothers docked in Nusantara for the first time in 1596. It preceeded the moment of six years later, after the fleet had already comprehended initial description on Asia's topography and trade, when a trading company was established, consisting of some Bataaf merchants called "The Dutch East Indies Company" (*Verenigde Oost Indische Compagnie*, VOC)³.

The ability of Orang Runcuk in adapting their life to the nature is a sure thing. Especially those living in the Southern Zone. While people from other zones were still relying on the availability of the game meat to survive, the people in the Southern Zone had recognized more progressive technologies,

2 Huangci is a name used long before the establishment of the Qing Dynasty. The term Huangci is predicted to have been existing since the Han Dynasty era (206 BC–220 BC) to refer to the body of water around Nusantara (Indonesian Archipelago) islands that were the destination of Chinese merchant ships. See Majumdar, 1936, *Suvarnadvipa: Hindu Colonies of in the Far East*: "... a passage in Tsienshan-Shu refers to trade between China and Huang-tche during 140–86 BC. Huang-tche has been identified with Abyssynia, Malay Peninsula, and Kanci in South India", p. 70.

3 See, for example, Denys Lombard, 2008, "Nusa Jawa: Silang Budaya Jilid 1", p. 61.

namely the ways to carry out agriculture, starting from cultivating the soil and making terraced field plots with wonderful shapes that were adjusted to the height and wideness of the ground surface around the mountain slope. Moreover, by such abilities, Orang Runcuk in the Southern Zone might even live and earn more than enough. They also earned some more from the trade relations with white people—as Mee Ong stated—who, in the local mythology, were described as “clever men whose bodies are short and skin as white as cotton, and so are their manners”⁴. Those are the people whom the name Saviour in the mythology of Southern Zone Runcuk was referred to.

However, things are interesting on the other side. In *Societas Tanaruncia* documents, the mythology said the other way around, and the white people were familiarly known as *De Godelijk Bedrieger*, or the God of Deceiver. Furthermore, in other aspect, allegedly due to the smooth relationship between *De Godelijk Bedrieger* and Orang Runcuk in the Southern Zone, *Societas Tanaruncia* personnels then hired a bard to create some stories that in the future would be famously known as *Het Oost Runcuk Sprookje van den Gulsigaard*, or The Tale of Runcuk about the Greedy.

Politics of Agriculture

The development of a complex social order according to social classification consisting of the classes of ruler and peasant that produces food—in the knowledge system of Western social scientists—is commonly termed as the development of civilization. Such terming has a quite long and complicated history; archaeological records show a great variety of processes that enable human throughout the world to encounter a transition from primitive human to peasant (Wolf, 1983: 5). Unfortunately, for Orang Runcuk living in the Southern Zone, things did not work that way. Due to the abundant yields they harvested in the area, Orang Runcuk were widely known to be insusceptible to lean seasons.

4 It was very contrasting with the writing inscribed on the archives found by Mee Ong in Hoppo that mentions Orang Runcuk as “a group of men who are unvirtuous, foolish, and lagged behind”. One thing is obvious: Orang Runcuk had a collective mental to be easily amazed by the presence of the strangers, of the people coming from outside the group, that was no other a medium to satisfy their desire of heroic figure.

They did not need to encounter hard and complicated stages of development as described by Eric Wolf on the life of the peasant in Europe and America. Orang Runcuk were even able to survive for an entire season with the yields they produced in only one harvest season (if they did not exchange them with other needs such as salt and fish).

Hoe de Rijst onstond - De Spijze nooit verveelt is another mythology about Orang Runcuk in the Southern Zone recorded by a Dutch folklorist when Societas Tanaruncia came and investigated the welfare sources of Orang Runcuk in the Southern Zone. Sibinga (1948), in one of his writings, described the origin of paddy, that purportedly came from the ashes of a beautiful goddess. The goddess passed away because she had been continuously undermined by the ugly giant who fell in love with her. The giant was persistent, that after the death of the goddess, he kept disturbing her by transfiguring himself into weeds that interfered with the fertility of the paddy crops (as the incarnation of the goddess), his love⁵.

Orang Runcuk's limits in thinking hindered them from creating novelty in their life space. It includes the originality of the myth aforementioned that tended to be similar to myths in other places, for example, the myth of Dewi Sri (Shridevi) in Java and Goddess of Prosperity in an area of Nusa Tenggara Timur (East Nusa Tenggara)⁶. Thus, it can be figured out that Orang Runcuk basically had a remarkable ability to adapt (mimetic desire). That is what made Orang Runcuk in the Southern Zone could easily duplicate not only the mythological aspect,

5 For further explanation, see Mulder, J. Sibinga, 1948, "Hoe de Rijst onstond - De Spijze nooit verveelt", pp. 39-42.

6 The story of the Goddess of Prosperity is interesting. In Wilhelm Nomensen's dissertation (1953), he mentioned that around the 19th century, in a region which is currently a part of Nusa Tenggara Timur, there was a church missionary named Sérgio Baptista who used to live in the remote area of the island together with uncivilized human who practiced barbaric habit such as slaughtering virgin. Purportedly, the blood dropping from a virgin was believed to fertilize the soil. Consequently, towards the growing season, those clans kidnapped other clans' virgins reciprocally. Such practice was then banned by the colonial government in many ways. However, in his writing Nomensen also conducted a comparative study and delivered a critical interpretation on the barbaric ritual. As stated by Nomensen, slaughter is a symbol, a kind of small theatre performed by local actors to frighten people for the sake of decreasing the birth rate. It was related to the fact that in growing season, they needed many labours to cultivate the land. Meanwhile, if many women were pregnant, it would affect the effectivity of the planting process. Moreover, Nomensen also stated that the ritual was similar to a small theatre in Western society. A theatre might indirectly function to decrease consumption rate because the less number of the people, the more food reserves would be available. For further explanation, see, Nomensen, 1953, "The Savage of South East Asia. A Study of the Idea of Civilization", pp. 81-90.

but also the system of production belonging to a certain established society from other cultures, only by following simple instructions demonstrated by one foreigner.

It has been mentioned before that the agricultural ability of Orang Runcuk in the Southern Zone can be traced back to the Yangtze River valley in China. In the past, Yangtze River had its own civilization. The river stream supported the crucial trade route that connected Chinese people from the remote area to those living in the coastal area. Its significant existence did not only function as an economic trade route, but also as the spaces for symbolical exchange, particularly as the melting pot of many cultures from other nations. That is what makes Yangtze River is later also renowned as “The Mother of Rivers” from China.

According to Mee Ong’s advanced historical investigation, the relationship between Chinese people and Orang Runcuk who lived in colonies was initiated by a stranded Chinese merchant ship that due to a big storm was landed in the territory of Southern Runcuk River. This period was predicted as the beginning of the life change of Orang Runcuk in the Southern Zone.

It was told that during the big storm, all ship crews were missing. Some thought that unidentified wild fish preyed on them. There was only one man surviving after the accident, and he was found dying. He was rescued by several Orang Runcuk who were coincidentally hunting on the river side. The foreign man was then carried to a hut of a shaman and he lived there for days. For a certain length of time, his life depended on Orang Runcuk’s game meat. At the time he was fully recovered, he inevitably had to follow Orang Runcuk’s way of life to survive.

One day, he went for a walk with a little child, walking down the valley to the mountain slopes full of springs. Looking at the surface of the Southern Zone, he was reminded of his homeland in the slopes of Mount Tanggala for a moment. However, in his homeland, near Yangtze River, should one looked everywhere, there would be green fields of rice. While in Runcuk, what he saw was not more than the sceneries of lush hills and dark forests that promised nothing to him. In the middle of his reflection, suddenly he was reminded of the

ship carrying agricultural products that stranded him here. He immediately visited the shipwreck and found what he searched: rice and several kinds of grain that had been rotten partially.

Afterwards, he brought those grains to where Orang Runcuk usually gathered. Communicating in sign language, it was not too difficult to invite and convince stupid Orang Runcuk to cut some trees down, distribute some works, and open up some fields. He then taught them how to cultivate the field, build an irrigation system, and eventually modify a vacant field by planting the grains he had brought. Since that occasion, in a short time, the hunting tradition Orang Runcuk had been long accustomed to was replaced by agricultural tradition. Even though it was not entirely true, but Sahlins' argument (1960) on primitive economy was presumably able to reflect on the indications of Orang Runcuk's livelihood system changing, that in the end stimulated the changes of social relations and political formations in the Southern Zone. It was represented in his following statements;

“In primitive economies, the largest part of production result is meant to be used by its own producers or to perform kinship requirements, and not to be exchanged for the sake of earning profits. The consequence is that de facto, control over the means of production in primitive society is decentralized, local, and familial.

“Therefore we can draw the following conclusions:

- 1) relations of enforcement and exploitation in terms of economy and other related social relations, namely dependency and mastership, are not created within the system of production;
- 2) since there was no stimulation perceived from the exchange of agricultural products with most goods in the market, there was a tendency to confine the production to goods that could be directly used by the producers.”⁷

In the future, agricultural life sufficiently enabled by their fertile land brought welfare to Orang Runcuk in the Southern Zone. The surplus of food reserves were usually given away to animals they used to help them in cultivating the land in the

⁷ Marshall D. Sahlins, 1960, “Political Power and the Economy in Primitive Society”, p. 408.

mountain slopes. When harvest season came, Orang Runcuk always celebrated festive feasts for nights. Commonly, every family brought out the entire food reserves they had. Within those feasts, Orang Runcuk would usually make a sort of offering to the statues of gods and goddesses as an expression of gratitude. Besides those feasts may be interpreted as an expression of social solidarity, for Orang Runcuk in the Southern Zone, the food being offered therein was also the result of an achievement, thus the position of the food symbolically had a close relation to the tension of souls in each group of Orang Runcuk.

Considering the progress encountered by Orang Runcuk from time to time, the Chinese man who had been living for a certain length of time and able to speak in local language, after the growing season, expressed his desire to invite Orang Runcuk to make something that could float in the ocean—something they had never imagined even once. By following several simple instructions, such as: cutting down big trees which were initially consecrated by Orang Runcuk because they believed trees were the sources of life, chopping the logs, and then tied the logs one another until they formed a ship with four poles that were thirty fathoms long each. Later, this was the thing that would be recorded in history as Jung, derived from the word *Chuan* that means ship. In Hokkien, it is called Jun, and in *Undang-Undang Laut Melayu* (Maritime Laws of Melaka) it is called Jung, the cargo ship.

After spending some times outside the growing season, the ship desired by the Chinese man had completed and was ready to sail the ocean. The Chinese man invited several Orang Runcuk to load some surplus of food into the ship and proposed some strong persons to come on board and then sail to the Chinese man's homeland. It was the beginning of the contract of sale between Orang Runcuk in the Southern Zone and Chinese people, who would linger eternally in the myth of the Saviour—in *Societas Tanaruncia* document the Chinese were called *De Godelijk Bedrieger*, or the God of Deceiver.

The name the God of Deceiver within *Societas Tanaruncia* document was not without reason. *Societas Tanaruncia*'s desire to inculcate a certain influence in Runcuk people who had many potentials in the Southern Zone had to inevitably meet their competitor: the Chinese people who had previously

arrived there and built relationship with Orang Runcuk. The position of Chinese people in Tanah Runcuk was strengthened by the myth or Orang Runcuk's assumption that called them as the Saviour.

Once again, Societas Tanaruncia's nicknaming on the Chinese people as the God of Deceiver was based on certain reason. Societas Tanaruncia noted the foolishness of Orang Runcuk who were easily deceived with only foreign goods from the Chinese merchants they used to consider valuable, so that the relationship between Orang Runcuk and the Chinese people got closer—in other words, minimizing Societas Tanaruncia's opportunity to enter and inculcate their power in the Southern Zone.

Such forms of competition, by igniting racial prejudices, did not actually take place only in Tanah Runcuk, where they were framed within the discourses or myths of the Saviour, the God of Deceiver, and *Het Oost Runcuk Sprookje van den Gulsigaard* or The Tale of Runcuk about the Greedy. In other places, racial prejudices were even let to heat offhand and then exploded in 1740, indicated by the great massacre towards Chinese people, *de Chinezenmoord*⁸.

Closing

Thus, through the previous explanation, we may figure out what made Orang Runcuk in the Southern Zone have the ability to gradually charm a farm from a jungle and to change hunting and gathering tradition into an agricultural civilization. The change of tradition was certainly caused by the unexpected encounter between Orang Runcuk who were hunting and the Chinese man stranded near the river in Southern Runcuk. An encounter which, as the time went by, was mystified by Societas Tanaruncia, the Chinese people, and also by Orang Runcuk themselves for the sake of earning their own advantages. While Societas Tanaruncia called the Chinese as *De Godelijk Bedrieger* or the God of Deceiver, and Orang Runcuk called the Chinese as the Saviour because of their merit and ceaseless giving in the past, the Chinese themselves (in the archive found

⁸ See, for example, Denys Lombard, 2008, "Nusa Jawa: Silang Budaya Jilid 1", p. 65.

by Mee Ong) called Orang Runcuk as “a group of men who are unvirtuous, foolish, and lagged behind”.

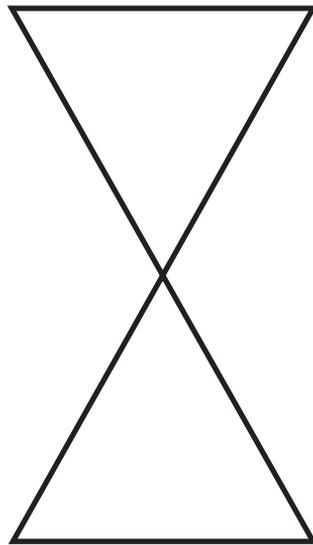
Certainly, there are some lacks within this writing. One of those, for example, limited data and records that became a specific challenge in the process of writing, that leads the description on the elements of ritual and social relation to be less deep within the elaboration of this writing. To end this writing, let us take a look into the collective experience of Orang Runcuk in the Southern Zone. Through such experience, perhaps we can recognize the social portraits of nowadays, or merely the scattered traces of our ancestors from the past. This writing is fully dedicated as a footnote on a land that currently remains in a search conducted by the Centre for Tanah Runcuk Studies (CTRS).

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The Legacy of the Forgotten Land

Memoir of Tanah Runcuk



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Myristica fragrans , a Strange Plant in Tanah Runcuk (Archive of CTRS)

Memoir of Tanah Runcuk: Rereading Ludwig Stern and Kreuzer Wallach's Travel Literature in the 'Lost' Land

Prof. Dr. Lukman Sudjatmika, M.Si

Introduction

Tanah Runcuk, or Tanaruncuk, is an area discovered by an adventurer-cum-coffee entrepreneur from Hamburg named Ludwig Stern, and his partner Kreuzer Wallach, an anthropologist from Frankfurt, in 1864. According to some sources that have been found, it is explained that Tanah Runcuk was the former colony of a splinter syndicate of the Dutch East Indies-VOC.

However, hitherto the experts are unable to find its exact location. The joint teams of independent researchers incorporated in the Centre for Tanah Runcuk Studies (CTRS) had begun a specific study on the journey and the ethnography performed by Ludwig Stern and Kreuzer Wallach in 2013. A series of hypotheses and theories have been developed in order to reveal this mystery.

CTRS researchers, in a thorough and careful way, conducted some studies on Ludwig Stern and Kreuzer Wallach's collection of (colonial) ethnographic records and artifacts found in a warehouse of a former library building in Weimar, Germany in 2006. Ludwig Stern and Kreuzer Wallach's existences had been unknown since their observation in Tanah Runcuk.

The writing you are going to read is a series of interpretation on Stern and Wallach's artifacts and ethnographic records made

by the experts incorporated in CTRS. The data and analysis will remain developing along with CTRS investigation on the mystery of Tanah Runcuk.

We hope this report may give an alternative viewpoint, and help us all in understanding the historical construct which all this time tended to be a single version.



A part of restored artifacts and piles of document and manuscript belonged to Stern. and Wallach. These valuable discoveries are rrently being studied by CTRS.

The artifacts and documents within the photograph have much to tell about Orang Runcuk and the mythology of The Strident Runcuk Horse.

(Archive of CTRS)



The map of Tanah Runcuk which was also discovered in Weimar, stored neatly within Stern's travel box

Historicians predict that this map was the one accepted (or taken) by Stern from the present given by Syaalman to Droogstoppel during his stay in Lauriergracht 37.

(Archive of CTRS)

Map

The map of Tanah Runcuk enclosed in this writing is the map given by “Syaalman” within his present for Droogstoppel. The map was later remade by Wallach based on his actual survey together with Ludwig Stern. It is very regrettable that the travel and ship navigation maps that brought them from Amsterdam to Tanah Runcuk remained missing. Based on the investigation of Sam Bergmann, a Swedish historian who performed some investigations and researches on the missing works of art and cultural artifacts, the Ancient Cruise Map of Netherland - Tanah Runcuk¹ has changed hands and been illegally sold in antiques black market.²

The topographic survey on Tanah Runcuk conducted by Ludwig Stern and Kreuzer Wallach was complementary to the previous survey result conducted by the Dutch people under the authority of Tanah Runcuk which was called Societas Tanaruncia (SOCIETAS—a sort of antecedent government in Tanah Runcuk).

Stern and Wallach themselves admitted that there had been some measurement discrepancy and inaccuracy intentionally ignored by Societas Tanaruncia. However, the topographic survey is still used to be the basic data functioning as a control variable in making some considerations of economic and expedition activities.³

Politics & Government

Stern & Wallach wrote in their notes, “*Notizen aus dem unbekanntem Teil der Niederländisch-Ostindien*”, that Societas Tanaruncia or “SOCIETAS” was actually an authority formed in secret by the Dutch chartered company (VOC) through an economic-political contract with the local rulers preceding the bankruptcy and the disbandment of VOC in 1799, followed by the Dutch’s loss against Napoleon Bonaparte, and the takeover of power over the East Indies under the control of France.⁴

A while after the period of political turmoil in France, Bartjan van der Bunt, a VOC sea captain in Batavia, also wrote in his

diary (the diary was unintentionally found within a chest in the Dutch's "Welvaren" ship that had been sunk in its journey from Batavia to Tanjung Harapan)⁵ :

"A number of VOC's conservative authorities smelled something fishy from the left-wing movement radical upheaval heating up in France. A number of these insecure officials suspected that the sore of the French Revolution would impact the political constellation of Europe, including the Dutch Empire. I have heard that a 'strategic retreat' had been prepared; even before the battle coming under their noses, thousands miles away from defeat. How disgraceful!"

Long before the discovery of van der Bunt's diary, Stern and Wallach had written as well as made a perusal and analysis stating that several VOC's high officials who tended to be conservative and corrupt made a series of speculation on the probability of the Dutch's loss in the Napoleonic Wars and its impact towards their economic-political constellation.

That very fear later urged those corrupt officials of VOC to make a confidential agreement—unbeknown to the Dutch Empire (both in Europe and in the East Indies)—with the local rulers who owned potential territories which had not been largely exposed and were located outside the mainstream of cruise and trade lines.⁶ The invisibility of Tanah Runcuk was put to use in order to conduct a strategic retreat, as precisely written by Bartjan van der Bunt in 1797.

Stern and Wallach underlined that some key documents and maps on the existence of this island have been obliterated by the double agent working structurally, systematically, and secretly in Amsterdam, Middelburg, Enkhuizen, Delft, Hoorn, and Rotterdam. The attempt of blotting out Tanah Runcuk from historical record is executed in order to save the assets, power, and influences of the syndicate of several VOC's stakeholders, employees, and corrupt officials in the East Indies. The suspicion regarding the existence of the stealth government of "Tanah Runcuk" was almost tracked by Raffles before his reign over the Dutch East Indies ended around 1815. However, his effort was forced to stop as the Congress of Vienna sued for the returning of the East Indies to the Dutch after the end of the Napoleonic Wars.

According to the founders' initial objective, Tanah Runcuk was indeed successfully isolated and free from any impact resulting from the war situation in Europe. This unidentified and undetected place became a paradise for hoarding the assets corrupted by VOC's employees and high officials, as well as by the Dutch Empire's stakeholders after the monopoly trading company went bankrupt.

It turned to be a "hiding place" for those who escaped the ideological turmoil and political pressure occurring in Europe at that time. The formation of the "stealth state" Societas Tanaruncia that used up a great amount of illicit funds could also be one of the factors that led VOC to bankruptcy. This very factor had not been recorded in the history of Europe until eventually Ludwig Stern and Kreuzer Wallach's ethnographic record was discovered in 2006.

By the local elites' lending a hand and by immersing themselves into the oligarchy that had been legitimated irrationally by the people throughout generations, Societas Tanaruncia held an absolute power over the entire aspect of life in Tanah Runcuk⁷.



"The photograph of Societas Tanaruncia plantation supervisor."

This photograph is predicted to be a result of photographic manipulation done by the colonial government for the sake of deceiving the people, as well as reviving the myth of the Megaphone-Head Strident Runcuk Horse. (Archive of CTRS)

To look at the context of the VOC at that time, Stockdale's writing (1811) might be an important reference. Stockdale suggested that in the period before 1740, the free people, who had never been under the control of the VOC, commonly went back to Europe as bringing abundant wealth. The situation had changed since 1740, when there was only a little chance to earn money by conducting individual trade. At that time, business was predicted to be nonprofitable day by day and the condition was not good at all. Such circumstances led the VOC backwards.⁸

As a comparison, Stockdale explained that during the same period (the middle 18th century) in Java Island, the governor-general of the VOC was holding a nearly unlimited authority.⁹ Formally, there was indeed an obligation of reporting accountability to and consulting the board for specific matters. However, in practice, the governor-general held the most independent and authoritarian power among all. It was very much likely to happen when almost all member had certain business with his power. The clearest example was the practice of nepotism, conducted for the sake of providing a certain advantageous position or occupation for either their relatives or friends.¹⁰

Stockdale also stated that in the East Indies, the governor-general assigned someone with the title "commissary of inland affairs" as the representative of the territorial power over the inland areas. The commissary was the person who adjusted all differences emerging from all local nobles, definitely with the governor-general's notice. The commissary was the party having the right to impose punishment and fine upon the local rulers who were bound to an economic-political contract with him. In this case, the fine was a source of great income for him. In the inland areas, he was a spectre revered like a prince, because one's happiness was determined by his power.¹¹ The authority within this structure and hierarchy, in conjunction with the weak control and difficult access to directly visit a certain area, had at least opened many chances of abusing the authority commonly occurred in that period.

Such scheme, supported with an organized coordination through a secret conspiracy between VOC's principal officials and the agents of the Dutch Empire's administration, had successfully

closed the whole possible access of information on Tanah Runcuk. The secret operation that went neatly and slyly turned out to last quite long and be unaffected by European political turmoil. Even after the East Indies was returned to the Dutch Empire by the Congress of Vienna (1815), Tanah Runcuk and its authoritative apparatuses managed to escape the clause of the agreement once again. Event though the local rulers held the power over and legitimacy from the people, *Societas Tanaruncia*'s economic-political pace remained controlled remotely by the next generation of the ruler of the East Indies whose movement was undetected, neither by Batavia nor Amsterdam.¹²

Geography

According to *Societas Tanaruncia*'s record, the area of Tanah Runcuk was 12,539 square kilometers. However, Stern and Wallach doubted this number. They assumed that Tanah Runcuk was broader, but unfortunately there was no more reasonable and scientifically adequate counter record found in comparison to *Societas Tanaruncia*'s data.

Tanah Runcuk was located in the borders of Pacific, Eurasia, and the Australian tectonic plate; it caused Runcuk to have many volcanoes and be on the tectonic earthquake belt. Tanah Runcuk had several active volcanoes, among others: Kawaruncing (the highest volcano of the land), Karasendendam, Tanagelap, Tanadjaoh, Tanaudjong, Patjakgilo. The volcanic ash resulted from the eruption was one of the main factors that fertilized Tanah Runcuk. This area was located on the equator, therefore it had tropical climate with two main seasons: dry and rainy seasons.¹³

The middle-northwest part of the island received more rainfall and tended to be wetter. On its diagonal line (northwest-southeast) lay Pegunungan Tak Sudah (The Ceaseless Mountains). The mountains geographically shaped the island's interior and divided it into two geographic patterns (western and eastern parts), as well as built the perception of north-south orientation. Tropical rainforest covered almost the entire middle-northern area of the island. The average temperature was around 22-29°C, with the humidity of 75%. Western and

eastern coasts tended to be hotter; the temperature might reach 33°C in dry season.¹⁴

General Condition

A. Northern Zone

On the northern coastline of Tanah Runcuk, there were many niches with extremely steep topography. High and sharp reefs in the likely shallow water made some cruises and expeditions avoid this area. Many ships were stuck and sunk in the sea around northern Tanah Runcuk due to the hazardous reefs that resemble underwater saws. The northern area rarely had beach; if any, it would be less sloping and less wide, craggy and not ideal for a ship to sail let alone to dock. Based on the note of observation from the sea written by the VOC's Cruising Team (1790), there were many high and steep cliffs directly led to the sea.

The land of the northern Tanah Runcuk was just as unfriendly as the others. The most part of the area had the characteristic of tropical rainforest which was relatively similar to the middle area, but most of them remained unexplored (*parte incognita*). Exploration of this area could not be escalated because of its unfriendly and insurmountable topography, particularly in the area Stern called as The Triangle of Death: Pegunungan Rumpunbatu (Rumpunbatu Mountains), Mount Karasdendam-Mount Tanatombak, Pegunungan Rumpunkelok (Rumpunkelok Mountains).

A number of indigenous tribes in the area survived by hunting and gathering food. It was estimated that 3-5 inland tribes lived nomadically around the area of the triangle of death. They lived and isolated their community, made no contact with other groups of society which had been established, settled down, and managed farms earlier in the southern side of the triangle of death. Such assumption departed from the stories circulating among a more modern tribe, living in the southern area of the triangle of death around Mount Karasdendam-Tajambibir Hill. The assumption was reinforced by Stern and Wallach's discovery of totem variation seen around the foot of mountain in the outmost of the triangle of death.

Stern and Wallach stated that the eminence of the triangle of death is its variety of height and short-range topography. These aspects ensure its environmental diversity and variety of habitat. The higher elevation generated rain in the area of the mountains, therefore such area was weathered and it had thick soil horizons and perennial stream (in fact, this theory was later proved to be true nearly throughout the mountains zone in Tanah Runcuk).

A difficult geographic condition or ecology hindered the dissemination of food production technology from outside into the area of the triangle of death. According to Wallach's prediction, a few people who remained living as hunters-gatherers, while in other areas of Tanah Runcuk people tended to be more advanced and sophisticated, managed to break away safely from the pressure of food producers precisely because they lived in an area unsuitable for food production.

B. Middle Zone

Natural Fort: The Ceaseless Mountains

In the inland area in the middle of Tanah Runcuk, there lay a row of high, wonderful mountains from the northwest to the southeast part of the island. The people of Runcuk called it Pegunungan Tak Sudah which literally means: the unending (ceaseless) mountains. From the point of view of The Ceaseless Mountains, other lower mountains and hills appeared to spread randomly to all directions, forming a wide and various valley. A beautiful landscape with steep cliff and valley was the characteristic of the topography of the area around The Ceaseless Mountains. The inland areas around the mountains had a relatively high level of humidity, dominated by tropical rainforest. Referring to Stern and Wallach's experiences, the area was said to have apparent mystical dimension, manifested into floras and faunas having a kind of negative energy in a high and fierce intensity. Compared to other areas, the intensity of mystical atmosphere indeed got intensified along the area of The Ceaseless Mountains.

Hundreds of poisonous plants and giant-sized flowers were spread throughout the inland areas. The old, high and dense trees, with large diameter trunks and giant-sized roots, of various kinds grew thick within the jungle. In this area, a great number of predators also prowled. Insects and birds also existed in unreasonable number and various kinds. Venomous reptiles, small-large-giant-sized mammals, bushes, poisonous flowers were scattered around and shaped the complexity of this very habitat.

Stern and Wallach once made an illustration and brief notes on the biodiversity of the forest located in the end of The Ceaseless Mountains, adjacent to Pucukrimba River and Tanagelap Volcano. Stern and Wallach underlined some anomalies (mystical anomalies) within the kingdoms of animalia and plantae. The illustration they attached to *The Origin of Realms* described some animals and plants whose frequencies were on the scientific threshold, that they were able to store such a great energy and mystical potential manifested into physical shapes, and the excess of psychokinesis that negated the natural law.

The mystical anomaly in a biodiversity could be classified, and it became more complex and dominant in several specific areas here, particularly on the land where two or more big streams of river met the “fort” of The Ceaseless Mountains. Stern and Wallach marked this area within the map with the illustration of “Devil’s Flower” which they called as *Safanus lucifera*. This plant is a kind of giant carnivorous plant that preys on small reptiles and insects. It wafts stinking odor and grows wild as parasite. A place with such identification could be found in the northern side of The Ceaseless Mountains, hedged in by Pucukrimba River–Belago River, as well as in the western side of the mountains fenced in by Airpolah River–Masampolah River–Aerkarat River.



Typical orientalist admiration and exaggerated enthusiasm towards the exotism of the jungle in Tanah Runcuk were predicted to contribute to obscure some objectivity of the morphology of this image.

(Archive of CTRS)

C. Western Zone

The west side of the island, viewed from The Ceaseless Mountains, looked terraced starting from the coast to the foot of The Ceaseless Mountains. The coastal area of the southern and western sea was lowland, mostly covered with mangroves, bushes, and some swamps. The opposite condition happened to be in the north, southeast, and northeast sides, where mountains and rocky hills lay more closely and varying.

The landscape and condition of the area around the volcano in the western zone (Mount Tanagelap and Tanajaoh) of Tanah Runcuk were very contrary to the condition of the inland in the middle zone. The condition of the area within a radius of more or less 10 km around the volcano tended to be dry and sandy, also consisted of savanna or homogeneous forest. Low humidity, high intensity of mountain-valley breeze, and relatively cold temperature were identical to the area around the foot of this volcano. Great rocks and volcanic sands were the sediments beneath the river and the valley which were the streams flowing the lava of those active volcanoes.

In this area, the dominant fauna was Runcuk horses, or *Equus ferus sonitus*. The population of this communal animal drastically decreased due to the rituals and traditions of the people of Tanah Runcuk to hunt and take the heart of Runcuk horses.

The coastal area was relatively hotter and dry. The average temperature in dry season might reach 33° C.

The coastal area was as beautiful and wondrous as the mountains in Tanah Runcuk. The main excellences of the nature of Tanah Runcuk were clean and healthy air, as well as its amazing sceneries. After walking for a while from the beach to the mountain, we could see the beauty of a mysterious thick forest. Even in dry season, the air was always fresh and the rivers kept streaming fresh water. Some low and highlands in the west coast were overgrown with paddy, whose fields were irrigated by surrounding rivers with terracing system. Stern and Wallach called such landscape as “the marvelous land of green”.

Rivers and abundant supply of water supported the livelihood within the area. The relatively flatter natural condition with gradual slope enabled the people to settle down, cultivate land, produce food (by farming and breeding cattle), and build a more stable settlement. The area in the western side of The Ceaseless Mountains was the centre of civilization with the most sophisticated technology ever happened in Tanah Runcuk. The long and friendly coastline also enabled ships to dock; thus this is the place where Societas Tanaruncia built its administrative basis and central government.

The availability of suitable mammals and wild plants allowed the citizens to collect the appropriate biological package for the survival of generation. Here was also the place where food production did not generate much competition, and hunting-gathering lifestyle was almost unrecognized. Moreover, the aquatic resources (fish, freshwater and sea clams) were available in abundant amount of supply.

The soil was quite friable and it did not require much treatment, which was very suitable for tobacco plantation. The citizens planted tobacco and paddy intermittently with only one harvest season each year. Following the harvest of paddy and tobacco, the soil was left vacant until the next growing season. Young tobacco plants were produced in a higher land, in the area of the western foot of The Ceaseless Mountains.

C. Southern Zone

The southern part of Tanah Runcuk was an area which was very ideal for plantation and terraced field. The topography of the land had a gradual transition from low-mid-high altitudes in quite long distances, making the land suitable for domesticating plant and animal for the sake of food production. Stable rainfall and humidity as well as regular change in the season made this zone worth for living and settling down (building colonies).

In a relatively higher land, it had the characteristics of black soil mixed with sand, very ideal for coffee plants. The area around Tanatengkarok Hill and

Perkara Hill were not much exposed to the sunlight and received less rainfall (which could wash away the fertile soil). The valley around the foot of the mountain or the slope of low hills were the places with the finest fertility because they were flanked by two volcanoes (Tanaujung Volcano and Pacakgilo Volcano). Thus, people opened many coffee plantations here. The altitude of this area indeed impacted on the longer period heading to the harvest season, but it produced excellent coffee beans.

The land was overgrown with bushes, weeds and reeds (*Saccharum spontaneum*), indicating that the land was very fertile. It was also the centre of pepper plantations that needed a similar treatment to coffee plants. On the side of the rivers streaming down from the mountain springs, many indigo plants grew. Indigo mostly grows both in mountaneous area and lowland. Indigo is the raw material of indigo-blue dye processed into liquid form. The dye was made by squeezing the leaves with some limes. It resulted in the dye primarily used in Tanah Runcuk.

The cotton grown in this area was the variety of *Gossypium herbaceum*. It was the raw materials of people's clothes. Cotton produced from woody plants, growing approximately 1.5 feet high, and commonly planted in the fields after harvest season, might be picked in less than 3 months.

D. Eastern Zone

In the east and southeast coasts, including the islands around them, the area still had much forests even though not as thick and heterogeneous as the other zones in Tanah Runcuk. Some areas were indeed barren and desolate (just like the island in the northeast side of Tanah Runcuk where Stern and Wallach stopped over for the first time).

The differences of geographical characteristics impacting on contrasting periods of season (between the west and east side of The Ceaseless Mountains) were caused by several factors, particularly some high mountains which imaginarily divided Tanah Runcuk into two geographical interiors. When the southwest wind brought high precipitation, the rainfall tended to be restrained by the height of The Ceaseless Mountains. The restrained clouds on the west side of The Ceaseless Mountains would generate rainfall in the western zone, while the eastern zone did not experience the same season. Mount Pucukrimba and Pacakgilo Volcano (on the southeast side), as well as Rumpunkelok and Tanatombak Mountains (on the northeast side) with such altitudes that were able to break and hold the monsoon seemed to fortify some parts of the eastern zone from longer dry season and low precipitation.

It impacted on the type of the forests overgrown this area, which was dry tropical forest. The trees growing therein were able to store water and food supply for the plants to survive the dry season; and the leaves tended to fall in dry season. Such condition certainly affected the creatures living within.

Sunlight might reach the ground, thus it was less favourable for the trees. The biodiversity of this place was lower compared to other areas in Tanah Runcuk. Some large-sized predators, and also vertebrates, proved their adaptability to the difficult climate. Water supply was the key to life within this area.

In an area with low humidity (closer to The Ceaseless Mountains), or with relatively shallow groundwater, the spectrum of the forests would turn into evergreen forests. It might be observed along the river stream: many trees remained green because the leaves did not fall. In this kind of area, the formation of the forest became wetter.

The dominant plants growing in the eastern zone of Tanah Runcuk were among others candlenut (*Aleurites moluccana*, the same species as candlenut growing in Maluku), reonja (*Acacia leucophloea*), klampis (*Acacia tomentosa*), sengon (*Albizia chinensis*), terisi (*A. lebbekoides*), Asian palmyra palm (*Borassus flabellifer*), Indian rosewood (*Dalbergia latifolia*), kesambi (*Schleichera oleosa*), walikukun (*Schoutenia ovata*), tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*), and so on.

In a small island (Chandana Island or widely known as Keciksebarong Island), located on the eastern side of Tanah Runcuk, there were abundant trees producing sweet-scented sandalwood (*Santalum album*). The island was the final destination of Stern and Wallach's journey (Stopover XIV). The wood of this parasitic plant was utilized as spices, incense, and creese blade. The wood has strong scent which might linger for more than one hundred years. Because the root is unable to support its own life, the sprout needs a host in order to grow. Since it requires a special condition to live, this island was the only place where the plant might grow.

Volcanoes, Mountains

Stern and Wallach entered Tanah Runcuk through a beach on the northeast side, after previously docked for a while in a quite barren and dry island across Tanah Runcuk (Stopover I). In the island, they penetrated to the inland area from the northeast beach located between Mount Tanatombak and Kawaruncing Volcano (Stopover II). From the seashore, Kawaruncing Volcano seemed to loom high. Due to its height which could be seen from afar, it became a sign for the sailors. Here, they were treated with very thick forests. As they entered deeper to the inland, Stern and Wallach reported that Kawaruncing Volcano was surrounded by desolate fields lying until the foot of Mount Tanatombak.

Rumpunkelok Mountains covered with tropical rainforest lay behind Mount Tanatombak. Barren fields with volcanic sand started to disappear and changed into the trees at the foot of Tajambibir Hill (Stopover III). From Tajambibir Hill heading to northwest, the forests got thicker and more complex as it approached Mount Karasdendam (Stopover IV). Wild and

savage animals, as well as mystical plants, dominated this place. The area lay on the eastern side of The Ceaseless Mountains; and big rivers with many tributaries streamed over it. Heading to north, Stern and Wallach arrived at Rumpun Batu Mountains (Stopover V) which was dominated by limestones and dry, barren land. This stopover made a sudden contrast. Continuing to the west side of Rumpun Batu Mountains, Stern and Wallach again trod tropical rainforest and passed through the end of The Ceaseless Mountains which was dominated by jungle. They continued the walk to reach the foot of Tanagelap Volcano that was desolate and sandy just like Kawaruncing Volcano (Stopover VII). On the northwest side, they saw Mount Tanajaoh looming clearly from the barren, sandy landscape at the foot of the mountain. In their journey, Stern and Wallach chose to go along the branch of Tanagelap Volcano extending to the southwest side: Mount Tanarimba (Stopover VIII). The mountain was covered with forest which was not as dense as in the middle zone of the island. Stern and Wallach went along the mountains and arrived at the tropical rainforest on the west side of The Ceaseless Mountains (Stopover XII). Thence they headed to the southeast to meet the edge of The Ceaseless Mountains ended with rocky Tanatengkarok Hill, located precisely next to Perkara Hill. From that place, they might see Tanaujung Volcano and Mount Rentetbukit on the west side. Meanwhile, on the southeast side appeared Pacakgilo Volcano exactly in line with Mount Pucukrimba.



Illustration of the ritual in a crater by Stern.

(Archive of CTRS)

Rivers And Lakes

The mountaneous area had many big rivers and tributaries; while there might be even more small rivers within. Many springs also spread throughout the expanse of the island. There is no point of counting the number of them all. Those rivers primarily functioned as the support for farming and the access to distribute big logs.

There were also a lot of lakes in different sizes which always provided freshwater all year round. Four big lakes recorded were Lake Air Dalam (located between Tanagelap Volcano and the end of The Ceaseless Mountains), Lake Salalaot (located at the foot of Mount Tanatengkarok), Lake Takberiak (located between The Ceaseless Mountains, Mount Karasdendam, and Tajambibir Hill), and Lake Tulangbatu (located at the foot of Kawaruncing Volcano).

Farming

Concentrated in the Western Zone – Southern Zone – East Coast (Access through the south route; by sea or land)

Paddy Field

Tanah Runcuk was very ideal for farming. Its fertile soil was able to grow any seed falling to the ground. The growth of plants in this area was relatively fast due to the help of the season and stable water supply. Most citizens of Tanah Runcuk earned their livelihood as farmers and fishers; the numbers were followed by the administrative officers of Societas Tanaruncia, and other jobs in the fields of artistic and recordkeeping (the numbers were very few and nearly undetected).

The farmers planted crops in a great amount. Other than to fulfill their own basic need, they also had to deliver their yields to Societas Tanaruncia (the sole authority in Tanah Runcuk). Since most of them earned their livelihood as farmers who depended on cultivating land, buffaloes, and irrigation system, they eventually formed a typical structure of agrarian society.

Fertility and luxury given by the nature for the farms did not force the farmers of Tanah Runcuk to give much effort in order to improve their standard of living. A little effort might be able to produce abundant yields. Being the staple food of the area, the cultivation of paddy spread over almost the entire land nearby the settlement.

In the work structure of the farmer, there was no division of labour based on gender. Therefore, each family had 8-10 workers in average. With such composition, half of the harvest generated a surplus and it was commonly managed to buy a few necessities of farming, clothing, and furniture. Nevertheless, clothing and furniture were never a priority. Children were left naked even though the farmers family could afford clothing.

Despotic governance run by *Societas Tanaruncia* impacted on the absence of protection over the proprietary rights of land in Tanah Runcuk. The ruler's policy on the result of land cultivation also tended to be unstable and pressing the farmers.

Plantation

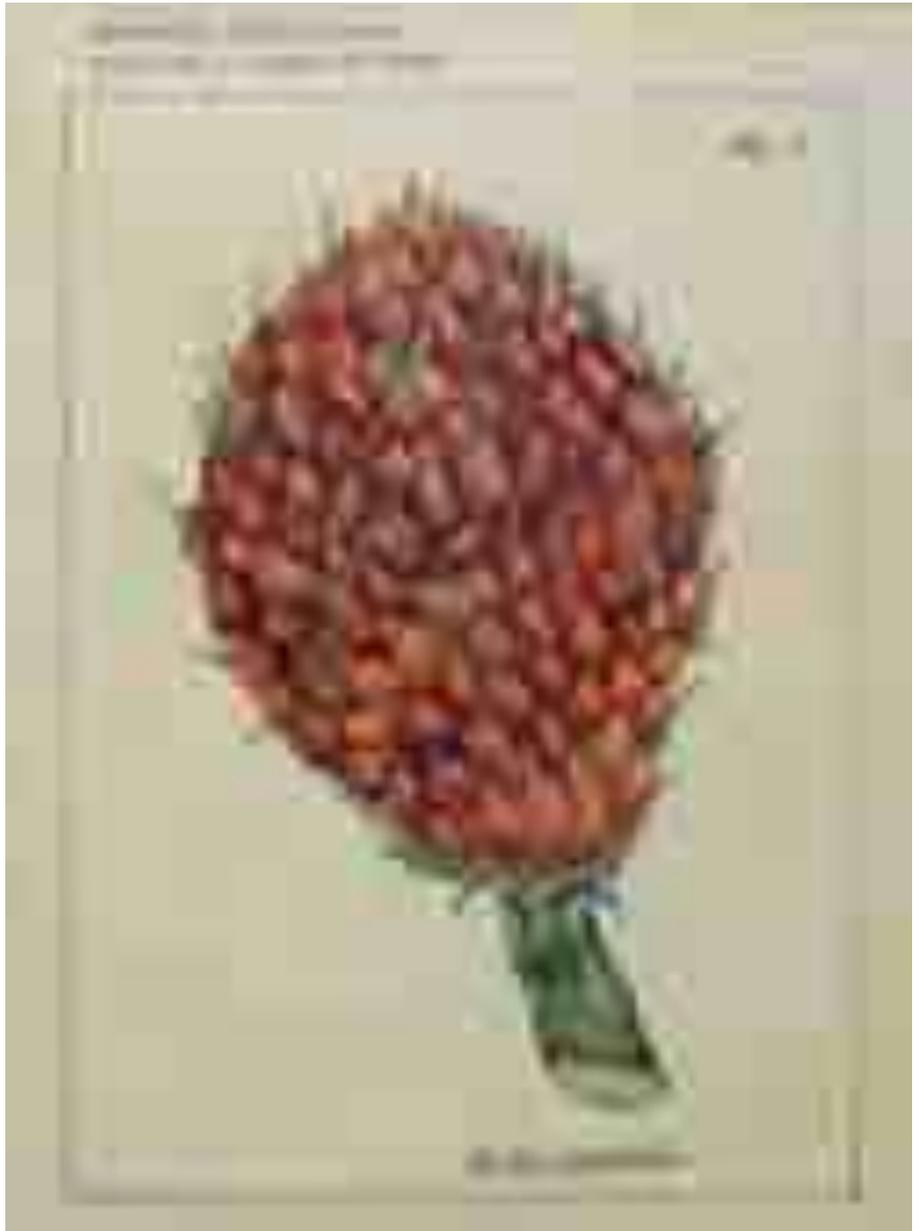
Plantation was executed in a systematic and organized manner. The land of plantation and its supporting facilities were concentrated in the western and southern sides of The Ceaseless Mountains. Within the areas, plantations and settlements were monitored and managed by *Societas Tanaruncia*.

Coffee was brought into the East Indies in the 18th century by the Dutch colonial. Thence it was smuggled illegally to Tanah Runcuk through some main harbours on the west side of the island. Later it was distributed by sea for its planting in the southern area of The Ceaseless Mountains. What had been recorded regarding Javanese people in the History of Java written by an English man, Thomas Stamford Raffles, tended to be similar to the way people planted, treated, and distributed the harvest to the barn in Tanah Runcuk; for example being done by the people under pressure and force, as well as other violent actions performed by the foremen hired by government.



Saccharum officinarum, plantation commodities in Tanah Runcuk

(Archive of CTRS)



Elaeis guineensis, a strange plantation commodities in Tanah Runcuk

(Archive of CTRS)

Pepper, opium, cotton, tobacco, indigo, sandalwood, sugar cane, palm oil, nutmeg (in Keciksebarong Island, on the east side of Tanah Runcuk) were the exported commodities managed by Societas Tanaruncia to be traded in the black market. The plantations which were forceful and bound the farmers tended to give no chance for the farmers to manage their own basic needs. Many farmers died of starving, escaped to the forest of The Ceaseless Mountains; or some of them committed suicide because they could not stand the oppressive rulers.



Elaeis guineensis, illustration of plantation commodities in Tanah Runcuk

(Archive of CTRS)

Orang Runcuk (The People Of Runcuk)

According to Stern and Wallach, the people of Tanah Runcuk were the members of the same race as the people living in Java, Sumatera, and around the southeast Asia. As written by Thomas Stamford Raffles on his investigation of Javanese people, their ancestors came from the islands on the east side of the Peninsulas of Asia which were the first place inhabited by human. Their ancestors were the Tatars¹⁵. According to Dr. Faris Buchanan who wrote the report on the monarch of Burma¹⁶;

“There was a great nation residing in the East Asia, including the Tatars in the eastern and western lands of China, the Chinese, the Japanese, and some other nations living in the Indian Peninsula outside Gangga, and in its southern and eastern islands, until New Guinea. The nation might be described as short, stout, gallant, muscly people who were very different from the Europeans. They have square face, with sharp forehead and chin, wide cheek bones, thin eyebrows, small eyes dented into the facial bones. Their nose is small, unlike the Negroes’ nose, it is not flattish. Europeans’ nostrils look parallel and pointed, while these people’s nostrils are nearly round and wide, septum nerium is the thicker part of their face, making it nonparallel. The shape of the mouth is common, the hair is coarse, straight, and black. Even those who live in the hottest place are not as black as Negro or Hindu, and those who live in the coldest place are not as white as European.”

Within their development of history and interaction with other civilizations, ancient Orang Runcuk, as the ancestors of Orang Runcuk, can be categorized into two groups. The categories departed from the distribution pattern and the way Orang Runcuk produced their food. The two categories include Orang Runcuk living in the inland areas (Orang Runcuk Dalam) and Orang Runcuk living in the coastal areas (Orang Runcuk Luar). The development of these two types strongly depended on the extreme geographical split of Tanah Runcuk.

Due to its relatively vicious and less explorable inland environment and nature, ancient Orang Runcuk mostly migrated (from one beach/island to another in Tanah Runcuk) by sea. However, since the arrival of the Europeans, the domination over sea was held by the more sophisticated and deadly

European fleet. It impeded Orang Runcuk's marine expedition and urged those who could not adapt to the circumstance to move deeper into the inland areas and became alienated from their own maritime tradition. Some others remained staying in the lowland and coast (concentrated in the southern and western zones), adapting by performing some syncretic actions.

Orang Runcuk Luar/Coastal Orang Runcuk

Orang Runcuk Luar, or the citizens living in the coastal area, were the sailors and traders strongly influenced by the spirit of expedition and struggle for a new place. However, they were increasingly pushed inside and eventually performed agriculture in the lowland, becoming the agrarian people who were bound to their fertile land, polite and calm, barely interacting with and at last not having much interest to cruising and foreign trade.

In order to bridge the alienation, (western and southern) Coastal Orang Runcuk really kept in mind their imagination of their past, maritime glory. These people of Runcuk lived in the pride of the past, and at the same time in the pride and possessiveness of "becoming the people who believe in God". The underestimation upon these believers was affected by the assumption that "monotheism" is the peak of spirituality. It made them accustomed to underestimate other people's talent, regardless of its being expressed out or kept in their own community.

Orang Runcuk living in the western and southern zones were collective yet hierarchical society. Compared to the people of other areas, those who lived within these zones (spreading over the coastline and its surrounding lowland) had earlier encountered and adapted to the values of spirituality, modern technology, and economic system brought by the merchants from India, Arab, China, and later Europe.

In Tanah Runcuk, lowly workers spoke in a language and dialect only known to their own community; they tended to be exclusive and showing up their social class. The dialect and language spoken by them could not be used as the means of communication with the people belonging to a higher social

hierarchy. Such situation formed a separator that confirmed the border of social class difference, while at the same time avoid any close relationship among different social classes.

Superstitious belief had been firmly ingrained and deeply-rooted in Orang Runcuk of almost all social classes. Monotheism, instead of setting them free from the attachment with superstitious and old beliefs, made a bigger chance for Orang Runcuk to legitimize the existence of such beliefs. Orang Runcuk Luar were very enthusiastic about worship and ritual, and it had been an inseparable part of their identity and honour system. In this case, honour is a well-maintained imagination; thus it might be a sensitive matter when someone tried to underestimate or belittle it.

Orang Runcuk's pride of identity was formed by the romanticism of their past glory, by means of their belief of myths and fantastic traditional stories. Orang Runcuk were a patriarchal society. The patriarchal spirit was represented in the way people worshipped time, honour, and full obedience to the persons who belonged to a higher hierarchy. Moreover, it was also represented in the awareness of their position within the social hierarchy of the society. These attitudes shaped inferior individuals, who concealed their enthusiasm and genuine traits that were actually energetic and sometimes quite extroverted.

The Social Class and Characteristics of "Orang Runcuk Luar"

In order to understand the characteristics of hierarchical society of Runcuk, firstly we must comprehend their individual/communal level of dignity. Orang Runcuk who belonged to a high social stratum, for example government executives or high officials, had the tendency to enjoy a certain luxury and wealthy life. They were usually sly and corrupt, showing many contradictions between their attitudes and the morality they worshipped and celebrated through monotheistic rituals. The citizens of Tanah Runcuk were generally influenced by their system and governance that were corrupt and applying double standard.

Otherwise, the lower class citizens (the majority of the people) was the most harmed group. Since they were uprooted from their maritime tradition, and pushed backwards to the inland areas, Orang Runcuk Luar lived by producing food and farming, which were later managed by *Societas Tanaruncia* in a monopolistic and authoritarian manner for the sake of illicit trade. The tedious oppression had deprived their confidence and courage to have any ambition and to express something independently. In articulating their attitudes, the people tended to prefer congregating and delivering communal expression, by means of prominent figure or patron as the representative of their voices. The emerging tendencies as the result of such characteristics were dependency and excessive confidence at voicing their arguments within a crowd.

In practice, Runcuk farmers as a part of lower class society (the majority) in Tanah Runcuk were those having the qualities of hard-working, discipline, and highly loyal. Such qualities were shaped by regularity and proximity to all aspects they had been working on for earning a livelihood: cultivating land, growing, and harvesting. The peasants were modest, honest, and natural. Their tendencies were contrasting to the traits of high class people: full of pretention and power-hungry.

Orang Runcuk were commonly obedient and innocent. They were basically credulous. However, living under a government that did not execute a clear legal enforcement made them have an inclination to be suspicious, and finally performed frontier justice upon those who were “assumed to be guilty” based on the values they believed in. Such inclination could be seen in their judgement upon the “guilty persons” in the form of either social excommunication or collective judgement by physical violence.

This kind of situation raised a trend among Orang Runcuk to take the act of revenge, that was commonly triggered by murder or jealousy. Past stories had proved that prolonged war often raised vengeance within Orang Runcuk—who were inferior, but having a high self-esteem. Such situation frequently lapsed Orang Runcuk into senseless violent acts.

Orang Runcuk who were uprooted from the habit of cultivating their own land had even worse behaviours. They were commonly the leaders of lower class being subject to *Societas*

Tanaruncia, or those having the trust of being the extension of the Europeans' hand in plantation monitoring and government management. This note has to be read and comprehended in careful manner because the society had multilayered pattern. Lower class society—the majority—should have been the emphasis while reading the context of Orang Runcuk; the concern given on them should be different from the way we look at Orang Runcuk who had been contaminated by the corrupt mechanism of Societas Tanaruncia.



A very rare antique map by unknown artist, describing the unknown part (*parte inognita*) of Tanah Runcuk

(Archive of CTRS)

Orang Runcuk Dalam

Orang Runcuk Dalam were the native tribes of Tanah Runcuk who remained living in the jungle throughout The Ceaseless Mountains (Middle Zone), the Triangle of Death (Northern Zone), the Area of Karasdendam Volcano, Keciksebarong Island (Eastern Zone), and other wildernesses in Tanah Runcuk.

The inland tribes were mostly unidentified and unclassified in a proper way. Other than the natural condition that caused them to be unreachable, the reason was that these tribes were likely to be nomadic.

Based on the discovery of several totems in the outer area of the Triangle of Death and the jungles of the middle zone, it can be traced and assumed that each tribe developed a distinct language system and way of life, including the belief systems of animism-dynamism. Being geographically separated and

not having any direct contact with Orang Runcuk Luar led to the absence of cultural and value exchanges between Orang Runcuk Dalam and Orang Runcuk Luar.

Following the arrival of VOC who later infiltrated the local elites around the coastal and lowland area, and claimed themselves as *Societas Tanaruncia* (*Societas Tanaruncia*), Orang Runcuk Luar underwent a rapid acceleration of civilization. The entire aspects of life rapidly evolved and were oriented to economy. The hegemony gradually brought some major changes in the existence of Orang Runcuk in general, and of the closest tribes to the more modern civilization of Orang Runcuk Luar in particular.

The pace got faster as the economic liberalization of the Europe affected the pattern of agriculture and plantation industries in the western–southern zones (1850-1860s). The demand of industrialization upon certain commodity plantation by *Societas Tanaruncia* had impacted on some agrarian expansions to the middle zone where Orang Runcuk Dalam lived.

End Notes

1 According to Bergmann, the missing *Ancient Cruise Map of Netherland Tanah Runcuk* was secretly made by a VOC cartographer named Johannes van Witsen in 1780s. In the late period before VOC was officially disbanded.

2 Bergmann, Sam. *World War II Cultural Artefact Cases. Apollo-Historia* (1993): 62-41

3 Stern, Ludwig. *Notizen aus dem unbekanntem Teil der Niederländisch-Ostindien*. 1868: 14

4 *ibid.* 23-37

5 “*Welvaren*” was discovered in 2002 by a Spanish maritime archaeologist. It was recorded that there were 653 VOC ships sunk in the period of 1595-1800. *Welvaren* ship led by Bartjan van der Bunt was drowned due to the leaks on the ship’s body caused by cannon fire at close range. At this time, the ship and its entire load, including Bartjan van der Bunt’s diary—the data source of this study, are under restoration in Crusoe University Museum.

6 Some historians called this confidential agreement as *Geruisloze Verhandeling*. The location and time of the agreement, as well as the attendees remain being debated and further tracked by the Centre for Tanah Runcuk Studies team.

7 This political model was commonly done by the VOC in order to fasten their power in the East Indies area. For example, as stated in the notes written by John Joseph Stockdale (1770-1847) within his book *Island of Java* published in 1811 in England, it was told that the kingdom of *Susuhunan*, or the King of Java widely known as *Susuhunan Mataram*—the name of the place where he lived—once occupied the most part of Java Island. However, it started to lose its glories and significances since the appearance of VOC. Such situation remained until finally the kingdom showed its mistake and weakness due to the king's losing face after the rebellion of Manko Boeni (Mangkubumi), a prince of the blood. Mangkubumi made the king trust his territorial right to the VOC (also called as *Kompeni*), in exchange for another part of support by becoming their vassal and demanding protection over him, and at the same time committing not to crown any King of Java who was not the prince of the royal family. This event caused Mataram to be divided into two; one part was devolved on Mangkubumi, as the vassal of the *Kompeni*, with the title of Sultan and the promise of receiving the same protection. Under the VOC's control, the local rulers lost their power over the northern sea of Java that was actually crucial for trade and cruise affairs. The kingdoms in Java Island were "forced" by the circumstances to cultivate their land instead of thinking about their ocean. Each prince was bound to a promise to deliver the entire yields of their regions to the *Kompeni*, and not to build any relationship with other authority. Instead of quenching the feud, the VOC kept the hostile tension high between the two divided kingdoms. For the VOC, if the area as wide as Java was ruled by a sole ruler, it would clearly be a dangerous potential to their economic-political power and interest. It was better for VOC to have control over the two opposing parties with particular approach to each kingdom. Jealousy and hostility among the indigenous kings were the safeguard of the VOC's political perpetuation. Furthermore, in order to maintain the people-based legitimacy of the king's power, the myth of "Ratu Pantai Selatan" (The Queen of the Southern Sea) developed and was integrated into the life of the people in the land of Java. "The Queen of the Southern Sea" was believed having a certain relationship with the king (who just lost his power over the northern coast of Java). Back to the writing aforementioned, Stockdale also affirmed that if only the kings of Java united to fight against the VOC, they would have likely pushed the company backwards and caused certain obstacles for it to maintain its power over the land of Java.

8 Stockdale, John Joseph. *Sketches, Civil and Military, of the Island of Java and Its Immediate Dependencies*. London (1811): 94

9 *ibid.* 59

10 The second paragraph of the oath taken by the governor-general of the VOC and the entire Indies chancellors in their appointment ceremony says "not to receive present in any form, either directly or indirectly, from anyone under their authority; as well as, for the sake of respect, or any hope and advantage, or other individual considerations, either in a personal relation, friendship, or any other, not to assign or cause an assignment of other individual to a certain title, position, or office, unless for the ones who deserved it, which means those who have experiences, honesty, loyalty, and more capabilities to bear such position"—in this case, they perceived this oath as something mighty.

11 Stockdale, John Joseph. *Sketches, Civil and Military, of the Island of Java and Its Immediate Dependencies*. London (1811): 95

12 Bambang, Dalidja. *The Hidden East: An Introduction to the Lost Memory of Runcuk People*. 1960. Chicago: FOPS Press. Pages 79-94

13 Godfrey, Robert. *Dark Archipelago: Tanaruncuk*. Chicago (1960): 15

14 *ibid.* 27

15 Raffles, Thomas Stamford. *The History of Java*. 1817

16 *Asiatic Researchers*, vol. v, p. 219, octavo edition.

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Kempen

The Mythology of Runcuk Horse and Its Transformation:

Orang Runcuk's Strategy in Negotiating with Changes and Others

Drs. Daliho Kusbirin

The population of Runcuk horse was spread in the western zone. Throughout all generations, Orang Runcuk believed that horse was the carrier of their ancestors' souls within their journey to moksa. Instead of releasing and setting Runcuk horses free in their wild habitat, Orang Runcuk performed a tradition to hunt the male horses that commonly led the herd of Runcuk horses.

Orang Runcuk practiced a specific technique to be able to identify the leader of the herd of Runcuk horses by a kind of observation usually called *magonggei*. *Magonggei* was performed by surrounding the herd of Runcuk horses and terrorized them. Clamorous masculine cries and ancient mantras coalesced with intimidating movements acted upon Runcuk horses would ravage their formation and disperse them. Within such chaos, the one horse that reacted by acting fearlessly yet defensively (usually cried the most noisy and ear-piercing shout, as lifting its two forelegs—instead of running in panic) was the leader of the herd that would later be the target of the game. Orang Runcuk would hunt it down, barefooted, with spears as they kept shouting boisterously to threaten the horse.

Orang Runcuk believed that their honour to their ancestors' souls carried by Runcuk horse had to be released along with the death of Runcuk horses' herd leader during a hunt conducted in the noon towards the full moon. Orang Runcuk called the leader of the herd as "The Strident Runcuk Horse". They believed that the spirit of The Strident Runcuk Horse was the supernatural steed for the ancestors' spirits in every full moon.



Photograph of The Megaphone-Head Strident Runcuk Horse. The photograph was the initial appearance of The Megaphone-Head Strident Runcuk Horse published by Societas Tanaruncia.

It was published almost simultaneously with the land clearing for new plantation in the Southern Zone of Tanah Runcuk. (Archive of CTRS)



Another images officially published by SOCIETAS as the means to create the myth of The Strident Runcuk Horse (Archive of CTRS)

The hunting of The Strident Runcuk Horse was a complex ritual that involved almost all adult men in the village around the foot of Mount Tanarimba. The hunting ritual was usually begun with the old shaman of the village reciting ancient mantras; he had purged himself for the mantra reciting by fasting and not talking for 3 days.

The captured Strident Runcuk Horse would be immediately brought to be purified in the village; they would perform '*ponge*' (beheading the horse so that it would not be strident in the spirit world) and take the horse's heart to be eaten by those brave men who had conducted the exhausting hunting.

Runcuk horse's heart was believed to increase stamina, faith, and sexual desire. This tradition can still be seen in several villages at the foot of Mount Tanarimba. However, this practice indeed encountered some significant shifts, particularly in the coastal area which had interacted with economic liberalization managed by the local elites and colonial government.

In the more advanced coastal area, common Runcuk horses (not the leader of the herd/The Strident Runcuk Horse) were intentionally hunted in ordinary moments to be domesticated, and the hearts were taken as commodity. The practice of trading Runcuk horses' hearts were common in this area, because after all, the local society strongly believed the benefit of Runcuk horses' hearts within their everyday life.

The Megaphone-Head Strident Runcuk Horse: Stuttering in Welcoming the Forced Modernity

There was an interesting fact that existed and was believed, related to the contact of industrialization and modernization brought by the local elites and colonial government into Tanah Runcuk. Since the arrival of modern machines and devices smuggled from Europe, Orang Runcuk had encountered a great culture shock. They seemed to be baffled on how to position those “strange” devices into the mystical logic they had been living in their everyday spirituality. Irons were splashed with holy water and anointed with ancient mantras. Even at the most extreme point, The Strident Runcuk Horse that was getting rare was eventually mystified in a very hybrid and naive imagination. Stern and Wallach, with a great enthusiasm, described The Strident Runcuk Horse imagined by the villagers, as the megaphone-head Strident Runcuk Horse. People called it *Jaran Amogan*.

People needed something to believe in, as the affirmation of their existences in the middle of their cosmological universe. The presence of modernity enforced by the colonial government in a lopsided manner largely contributed to create some shocks and collisions of the meaning of body and collective memory of Runcuk people—who held firmly to the tradition. Such collisions later negotiated one another and finally created another space for the people to remain finding themselves within a very personal and spiritual—in this context: mystical—level. Thus, the model was manifested into *Jaran Amogan*, that was believed as the supernatural horse that brought a message from the ancestors to the living human who still coped with the worldly things.

This irrational indication turned out to receive a serious response from the colonial government and local elites. The colonial government published some pictures and photographs of *Jaran Amogan*, and then frequently summoned traditional shamans to conduct the celebration of honour to *Jaran Amogan*. The rulers intentionally reproduced hybrid visual imaginations of this megaphone-head horse, with the support from literary texts produced by the local elites of the kingdom in the form of new mantra scripts and some rituals to keep Orang Runcuk away from rationality.

One of the scripts (hummed as a mantra on the days of birth, marriage, and death) from Tanah Runcuk presenting the figure of *Jaran Amogan* is the script of *Malalongkè Pacah*:

“hai’ing khu mawè mi ka lamm ka lang ho

Ulèkaba sok malalongkè

sokmelaka bo

Poh raham ka amogan Jaran jaraga amogan

Hè lammo thakka arènnemo thak ka lang

Irakkanne sak kai’ matalong ka long kamogan

Nahha eo kai pacah matalong thak ka lang

Ampo alèkaba sok malalongkè

sokmelaka bo

haiing khu mawè mi’ ka lamm ka lang ho”

The script narrates the last king in Tanah Runcuk who met all spirits of their ancestors, the warlord, and the ruling queen of the ocean by riding *Jaran Amogan* to the highest sky through the peak of Mount Kawaruncing. The encounter resulted an exhortation for those who were still living to always surrender to life and preserve the tradition and ritual at the foot of the mountain so that salvation was with the entire living things.

The script showed the multilayered hierarchy of power ranging from the high world (ancestors’ spirits), the ruling elite (the latest king), and the people as the low world. The top-down power relation, from the high world to the low class with the intercession of the king (as the extension of their ancestors and supernatural rulers’ hands) can be interpreted as the model of ideological reproduction and power legitimacy which were immaterial and tended to be irrational.

Through the rites (required by the ancestors’ spirits to the people with the intercession and under the responsibility of the

king), the people were interpellated and maintained to remain in their own social class (surrendering, for their salvation).

Who else were benefited by this illusion but the elites and the rulers?

Archive CTRS.





“Magical Horse Hunters”

Ethnographic drawing by Ludwig Stern.

(Archive of CTRS)

Reading the Pattern of Aom People Settlement in Tanah Runcuk's Triangle of Death

Gata Mahardika

Introduction

Tracking the debates on the existence of Tanah Runcuk was initially an exhausting scientific attempt. The lack of domestic data resources once again made the unravelment of the mystery evaporate and forgotten, or at least, replaced by the issues closer to the interest of the market and the ruler. Indeed, the final question will always be about whether it is still relevant to discuss and (publicly) adduce this issue.

Such concern was eventually answered after Ludwig Stern and Kreuzer Wallach's travel literature was discovered and secured for further studies in 2006. The formation of a joint team consisting a number of interdisciplinary researchers from some universities in Europe and Southeast Asia, widely known as the Centre for Tanah Runcuk Studies (CTRS), had at least restored hope of and longing for questions and mysteries related to Tanah Runcuk. Investigations and studies on Tanah Runcuk are expected to be able to extend the spectrum of perusal upon the history of Nusantara, and to provide another entry into the historiography of Indonesia which has tended to be the state ideological apparatus hitherto, while lacking of alternative discourses (even until today, 16 years after the New Order was overthrown).

In this writing, I would like to process and conduct some analyses departing from Stern and Wallach's data on Aom People, an exclusive community residing in the northern part of Tanah Runcuk, precisely in what researchers and experts on Tanah Runcuk called as the "Triangle of Death". All hypotheses and explanations presented herein are temporary. They will always be developing according to the findings

and data analysis result performed by CTRS team based in Indonesia, Chicago, and Weimar.

Aom People in the Triangle of Death

There was a group of people inhabiting the area of the Triangle of Death. They were known as Orang Aom (Aom people). There were no many data or records on Orang Aom since they lived exclusively. Moreover, it was difficult to meet them because they resided in the Triangle of Death, which was a quite unaccessible area due to its dangerous and strenuous geographical condition. However, Orang Aom were believed to have another specific route to access the world outside; and not all of them knew about it. There were only few persons given the trust to work as hunter and the elders who were familiar with this secret route.

Stern And Wallach collected the data on Orang Aom through a series of observation of Orang Aom who had been alienated by their community.¹ According to Stern and Wallach, Orang Aom were alienated from the community when they were considered to break the custom. They were cast away from the Land of Aom by the “hunter class”. Before being exiled, the guilty Orang Aom would be judged with customary law, then stupefied with some traditional potions. Such methods aimed at making the persons lose the track to return to the community. While death penalty was imposed to the member of hunter class who broke the custom. Orang Aom could not read map. They recognized their natural routes from hereditary journeys and the signs left in the jungle, such as rocks or cave. Stern and Wallach recorded that there was never any expedition succeeded in finding the land of Aom, nor did they.

Alienated Orang Aom later gathered and created a new civilization which was more inclusive, instead. These alienated groups managed to accept the cultures from outside, and started to learn speaking in other languages (other than Aom language) and living with the outsiders.

¹ Exiled Aom people formed their own community in the southern area of Kwaruncing volcano. Related manuscript could be found in Stern's *Per Fidem Intrepidus*

The Model of Orang Aom's Societal Structure

Aom people were divided into five groups called “mata”. Those five mata(s) were Mata Singga, Hanim, Ruja, Angka, and Horo. They formed groups because of several reasons, among others:

1. Finding no land which was wide enough for the entire tribe to settle;
2. Plantation fields were not enough to produce the food needed by the whole society;
3. There was a customary taboo restricting them to change the natural topography—minimizing the consumption of natural resources as much as possible.

One Mata consisted of approximately 50 citizens and was led by the chief of mata called maramata. The division of mata was not performed based on lineage, but on the distribution of expertise. If a mata encountered a lack of workman, they would ask for citizens to other mata(s). Such social system was proved to minimize conflict within the community. It was beneficial, particularly for the need of information exchange.

Aom People's Migration Pattern

Orang Aom's life pattern strongly depended on geographical condition. Season changing in every three months resulted in extreme change in weather. In south and east seasons, rain clouds were restrained around The Ceaseless Mountains, thus the area of the Triangle of Death encountered a prolonged drought. Otherwise, in north and west seasons, rainfall extremely increased.

The ancestors of Orang Aom overcame this climate problem by living nomadically. They looked for locations with ideal climate. As time went by, they had found some locations ideal for settlement, which were later called as Soak Bare (North Land), Soak Ramu (East Land), Soak Lipur (South Land), and Soak Minggu (West Land). Each location had different house characteristic and model, adjusted to the geographical condition. It was quite unfortunate that Orang Aom could not

read map; it caused a difficulty for the study team to ensure precisely the location of Orang Aom community.

The more modern Aom people lived in seminomadic way, which means that they remained moving every three months but each location had already had a permanent structure that had been emptied for nine previous months. They had performed an agriculture system manifested in “grow-and-go” model: they gathered grains, tubers, and buds to grow. The plants would be ready for harvest in the next year, when the people had completed one round of migration. Orang Aom did not know barn because they did not need to store foodstuffs, indeed. The foodstuffs they were going to cook were directly taken from the harvested crops or the game meat. Orang Aom did not have any recipe of foodstuffs to use or combine, therefore they had never experienced shortage of food nor did they have any leftover.

Aom people believed that they were the people whom God trusted to keep the land of heaven or the ancestral land located in Aom Valley. This was the very reason why they remained living in the same environment which ironically forced them to move, regardless the fact that they knew how to move out from the Triangle of Death.

The Influence of Philosophy towards Orang Aom’s Vernacular Architecture

The rite of migration is an implementation of the philosophy of life which have been conducted through generations. Orang Aom migrated to visit and honour the guarding/ruling spirits in the four areas, with the reference of the mystical-imaginary axis (Kawaruncing Volcano–Mount Tanatombak as the supernatural territorials, the higher stratum, the land of the high god—the land for the sacred; Tajambibir Hill–Muara S. Kopi Tombak Bay, the stratum on which humans live and gain food from nature; and the area of The Ceaseless Mountains–Mount Karasendendam as the land of abstinence, purifying self from worldly sins). As the logical consequence, such cosmic consciousness kept Orang Aom away from excessive exploitation over the forest within this zone. Within Orang Aom’s level of mystical consciousness, each location

had different philosophical dimension. It was represented in the model of *uma* (rumah/house) that was always adaptive, adjusted to various ecologies and topographies in each point of settlement displacement. Every model of *uma* was absolutely determined by Orang Aom's cosmological aspect.

Orang Aom believed that their ancestors were born from the direction of the rising sun. Such belief made the East Land a sacred place. The area became the place where Orang Aom performed various rituals bestowed upon the ancestors. Otherwise, the West Land was the place for abstinence. Here, Orang Aom lived in the sacred grove and did fasting.

The west-east axis was where many unworldly activities took place, thus Orang Aom were not allowed to leave any trace when they left the West Land or the East Land. Meanwhile, the North Land and the South Land were the lands of grace given to Orang Aom. That was why *Uma Ramu* and *Uma Minggu* were nonpermanent, different from *Uma Bare* and *Uma Lipur* which had more permanent structure. Towards *Uma Ramu* and *Uma Minggu*, people only removed *banua* (wall and roof) when they were about to leave the land, while the main structure was left standing.

The primary subject of the architectural model of *Uma Aom* was its joints that did not use any nail. However, it was not similar to austronesian houses in common—applying the concept of *lingam-yoni* or interlock system such as *tumpang sari* in Javanese *joglo* (traditional house). *Uma Aom* mostly used knot and rope as the substitute of blocks that received the tensile strength. The ropes were made of knitted roots, by women. Orang Aom had a great number of diverse knots for each type of joint. A rope joint was considered more effective for a nonpermanent or semipermanent structure because, moreover, Orang Aom did not seem to know how to process the materials so that it would be more sustainable. It had implications for the structure of *Uma Bare* and *Uma Lipur* that required regular renewals.

The wall filler and roof materials of *Uma* were made of the arrangement of various leaves, commonly the palm leaves. This leaves arrangement was called *banua*. *Banua* could only be used for one period of settlement. However, the interesting

part is that they only needed 1-2 days to prepare the entire settlement of a mata.



Soak Minggu (West Land)

The settlement of the West Land was located within the sacred grove. It means that Orang Aom were not allowed to cut down the trees and could only utilize the branches or the trunks of dead trees. This ecological consideration impacted on the structure of Uma Minggu which did not use any hard (trunk) at all. Instead, it relied on the ropes tied to living trees.

The main tree functioning as the most important structure was called Papa Inang. With Papa Inang as the axis, ropes were stretched to all directions and tied to the closest trees (Papa Samimi). The ropes were knotted one another so that they could attach the wall and roof materials. Such structure was actually very rickety and shaky, but fortunately, during the period of settlement in this location, there was never any strong wind; and they lived within a very dense forest.

The pattern of house arrangement in Soak Minggu tended to be random. There was no rule of orientation or extent of the house. The structure completely relied on the composition of existing trees. Orang Aom comprehended such randomness as the form of complete surrender to what their god had given.





Soak Bare (North Land)

Orang Aom inhabited Soak Bare in the season of the south wind, when almost all areas of the Triangle of Death encountered drought and water shortage. Around estuary, some water was drinkable, but Orang Aom chose to make an installation system to increase the supply of drinkable water. They performed seawater distillation, by using a technique called *Kabaranohu Umpe*, which flowed automatically to each house.

Orang Aom did not have maritime culture, thus they did not know about ship. Therefore, they did not choose to live around the coastal lowland. Their settlement was located on the steep cliffs adjacent to the sea. The cliffs with the sea behind functioned to prevent damages when the north wind strongly blew. It was because the main structure of *Uma Bare* was usually left assembled.

The structure of *Uma Bare* relied on the cliff. The main structure consisted of four main pillars (*kampa kata*) arranged to form a plane which was then leant on stone wall. The need of this stone wall led to a housing pattern that lined up from west to east.



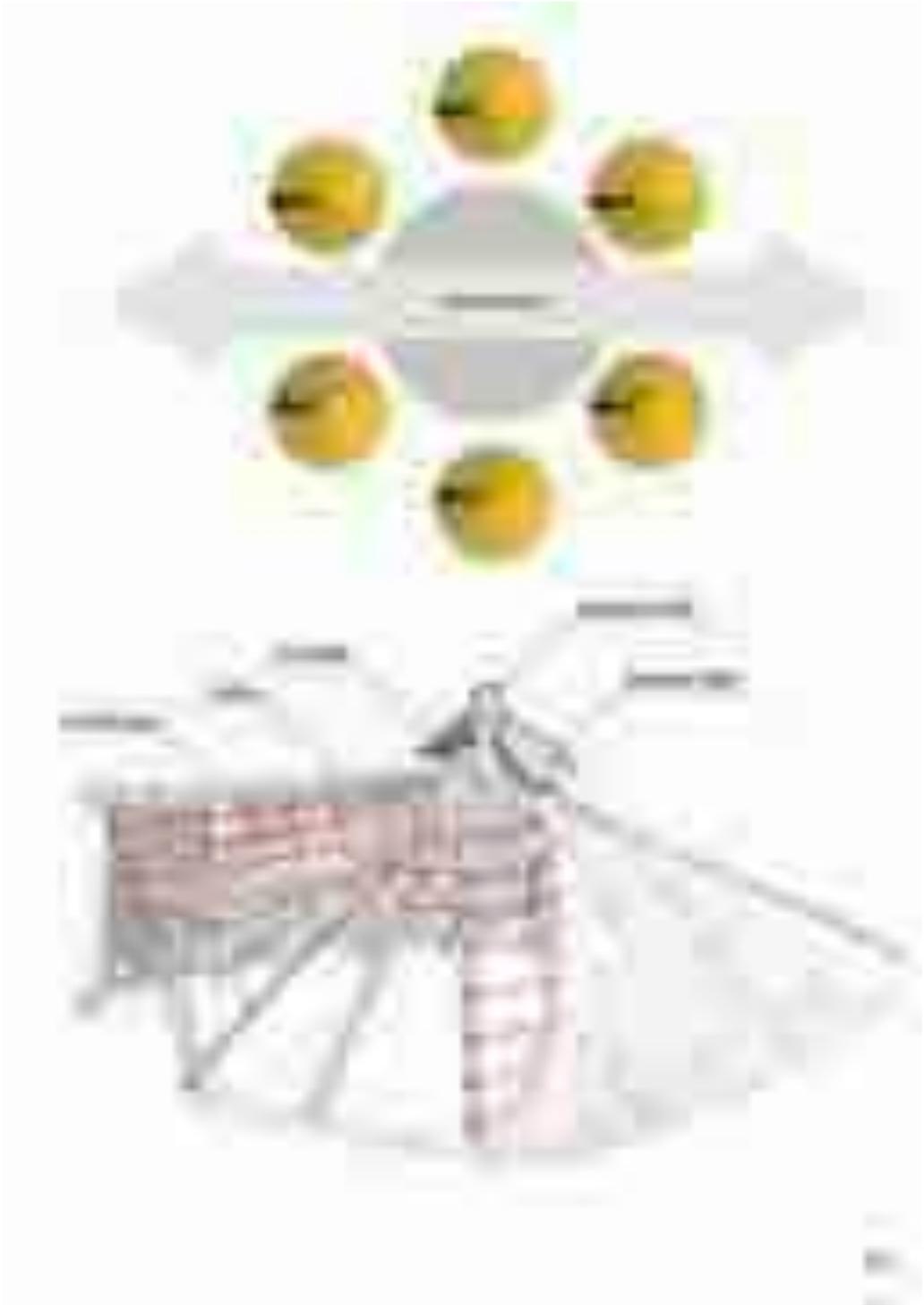


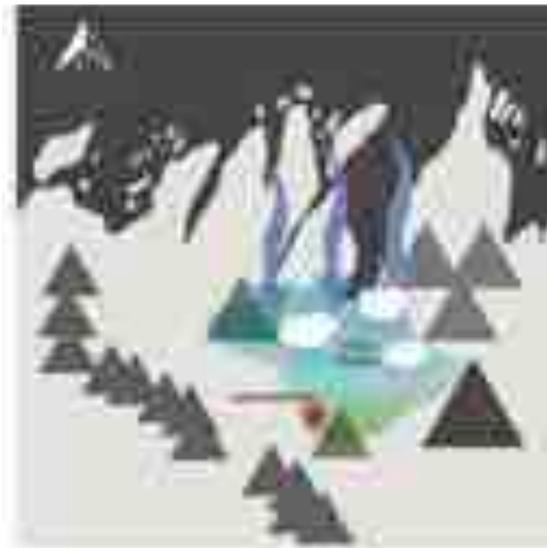
Soak Ramu (East Land)

The East Land was the sacred land, where Orang Aom performed many rituals bestowed upon their ancestors. Geographically, it consisted of savanna flanked by Mount Kawaruncing and Rumpunkelok Mountains. As happened in the West Land, uma in the East Land was not allowed to be permanent and it should be removed when they were about to leave. Since it was located around savanna, the model of the uma could not rely on natural objects such as forest, stone wall, or ground contour. The structure of Uma Ramu could stand on its own.

The shape of Uma Ramu was quite simple, resembling a tent. The problem they frequently encountered was a quite strong east wind. Therefore, Uma Ramu was relatively low in order to avoid large lateral load. Consequently, all indoor activities were conducted by sitting, and the door was always facing west. The materials were small trunks, with the diameter around 8-12 centimeters, that was burried half a meter deep. After dismantling the house, good trunks would be kept for the next period. Worn trunks were then burnt together with the firewoods for the sake of rituals.

There were 6 until 8 houses for a period. The amount had to be even-numbered. The pattern of settlement was a circle, divided into 3-4 houses on the north side, 3-4 houses on the south, and the central area with the distance of approximately 3 meters to each side. This area was meant to be the crossing for the ancestors which should not be disturbed. With such approach, within the radius of 3 meters, all activities but rituals for the ancestors were prohibited.





Soak Lipur (South Land)

The settlement of Soak Lipur was located at the foot of Tajambibir Hill. Among all locations, this area was the most difficult to reach. However, it was very fertile. It impacted on the easier gathering of foodstuffs. Orang Aom spent most of the time by knitting ropes for the material of the house. The geographical condition of this land was the most comfortable among the other lands. Philosophically, this was the time for worldly pleasure. During this period, many artworks were created in the form of totem and artifact (mostly discovered around Tajambibir Hill).

The shape of the house was the most ideal yet complicated one compared to the other houses. What made it complicated was the structure that could not be easily dismantled. Moreover, the woods were more durable. Therefore, they had more time to make a more comfortable house. The main structure used a trunk with branches. The branches were entangled one another in A-shaped form. This combination of branches was then tied up. The shape of Uma Lipur was similar to a gable roof with extended ridge. It was a shape commonly found in other Austronesian houses because such shape was very effective to overcome the tropical climate. It became crucial since during their settlement in this location, the rainfall of the Triangle of Death was on a relatively high level.





unknown artist (Archive of CTRS)

A Note on Music from Runcuk

Irfan R. Darajat, MA

Introduction

In the past, music was often positioned within a part of a ritual. The society living in Tanah Runcuk was no exception. Even more, this society put music along with the natural moves of the environment in which they lived. By Stern's record, we may find the proofs and explanations on how the people of Tanah Runcuk presented and located music among their daily life.

"... At the very first time I set my foot on this Land, a soft music played as the wind blew, making the leaves of the trees lining along in Tanah Runcuk whisper. I saw the women of Tanah Runcuk standing dispersedly in between trees, they were all whispering one another. Each word whispered by those women was different one another. Some words were said slowly and stutteringly, some others were spoken quickly and ceaselessly."¹

"This whisper flowed from the mouth of the women of Tanah Runcuk. I looked still at the sky, and once in a while turned my face to Wallach. He shed a tear, streaming half down the cheek, and the tip of his tear seemed to be flown by the wind. Not a drop of his tear was allowed to touch the tip of his lips."

"The night after the event, I talked to Wallach. He said, 'You know, the whisper at that noon, the whisper had made me cry, I was reminded of my mother, I miss her.'" I did not understand what was happening, but the feeling he had inside also occurred within me. I felt like being a child once more, on a cold night, I missed her, I wanted to go home to her embrace.²"

¹ Directly cited from Ludwig Stern's personal note which. Documentation of CTRS team.

² *Ibid* 1

The Musical Body

The investigation done by the researcher team towards the document recorded by Stern always failed to find any valid evidence regarding the musical activities of the people of Tanah Runcuk. Within letters, sketches, and other records, neither typical musical tool was found, nor any specific arrangement of tones created by the people of Tanah Runcuk. There was no animal hide or specific stuff devoted in musical activities in Tanah Runcuk.

However, the evidence of Tanah Runcuk's musical activities was written on some sheets of Stern's diary which was more like a poem. Just like Wallach's personal notes, there were some poems that had never been known to public, a kind of note he wrote for private matter. The writings led the research team into confusion as in the beginning they debated on the truth regarding the presence of the musical activities of the people of Tanah Runcuk.

The first strong speculation emerged from the following verse of poem written by Wallach:

*“Then on a cold morning
Sun broke through the gap in between the ceaseless
mountains
Piercing through my chest
The light radiated on the east horizon
Then on a cold morning
Grew the desire of all desires
The mother of all mothers
Each other whispering the words of love Into a smooth
song
Smearing wounds inside my memories
Like the men's hair tinkling because of the wind
Like the grief of mine Flying either”³*

3 The poem discovered among Wallach's travel literature. In the book, there were only ten poems written by Wallach. Seven of them were related to the people of Tanah Runcuk, while the rest described Wallach's grief and heartbreak towards a woman. It seemed that Wallach had unintentionally and unconsciously left some poems within his notes and he did not intend to publish them.

Those poems only gives a little explanation on the chronology of the event aforementioned. On the whispering women. The motives of the musical activities of the people of Tanah Runcuk, regarding the whispering women, was never clearly comprehended. Is it related to a welcoming for foreigner or guess? Or is it a ceremony of a completely different thing coinciding with Stern and Wallach's arrival at that time?

Regarding the "hair tinkling because of the wind", researchers conducted a deeper study on the poetry texts written by Stern and Wallach. The following poem shows how he described such thing.

*"I saw the men growing hair long over their backs
 They let the hair loose
 Blown by the wind
 Exposed to the sun
 Showered by waterfall
 Bashed by dust and dry leaves
 I saw a gloomy night inside the men's hair curves and
 contours
 They fostered sins and wounds from the inner side of their
 heads
 Then on a new morning
 They formed an adamantine circle
 Wiping each other's hair
 Cleansing up their sins and wounds
 They wiped their hair by long reed
 And right when their sins and wounds were tumbling down
 to the ground
 Resounded a heart-tearing tone
 At the time the reed touched their hair
 A deep anguish played
 I saw them gathering, their hair gleaming
 Resembling my tear
 Dropping into your heart"⁴*

His second note regarding the men's hair which was suspected to be one of the musical instruments played by the people of Tanah Runcuk reaped an ambiguous interpretation. In Stern's poem, it is written that the hair was tinkling; while in Wallach's note the hair was treated as it was a string instrument just like contemporary violin, with the reed stem as the bow.⁵

These two notes did not cause the investigation of the researchers to be stuck only on the debate over how the men's hair was treated as musical instrument. Moreover, it raised their curiosity about the structure of the hair used by the people of Tanah Runcuk. Was the thickness of their hair equal to violin or guitar strings that they could produce such sound? As written in the poem by Wallach, the men of Tanah Runcuk tended to take care of their hair. They grew the hair as long as their knees; some men's hair even touched the ground. In the photographs presented by Wallach and Stern, those men did not show their long hair. Instead, they curled it up with headbands, and thus the long hair was concealed. Such behaviour of taking care of hair was immediately eroded by colonialization that instantly cut the men's hair off for being made into jewelry or hairpiece for the royal princesses. It indicated the excellent quality of the hair.

Music is an expression of art originating in the body. Music consists of a circulation and or a backflow of hiding, listening, and hiding again. Making music is equal to making a dialogue with the body.⁶ The music from Tanah Runcuk could not necessarily interpreted as being generated and present miraculously as it was. It did not come out of the thin air. Several occurrences that indicated the origin of music in that land were the ones showing how they were able to unite with nature. A very strong connection between music and body was obvious. They used their bodies as the channel of their musical activities. Their source of creation originated from the sounds produced by nature or surrounding environment. To understand this matter further, first we need to comprehend the concept of soundscape and identify the soundscape found within the environment of Tanah Runcuk's settlement.

5 Bow is the tool to play the strings of violin. It is usually made of horse hair.

6 Cited from *Musik dan Kosmos, Sebuah Pengantar Etnomusikologi*, Prof. Shin Nakagawa, Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2000.

The Soundscape of Tanah Runcuk

At the time Wallach set his foot in Tanah Runcuk, he did not simply write everything he saw, but also every single thing he heard. In his note, Wallach mentioned that birds chirped cheerfully; he also heard the rattling sound of animals which commonly lived in the heart of a jungle mostly in the territory of the Dutch East Indies. The sound of footsteps was clearly heard, so was the sound of breaths, alternately sounded with the breezes from the mountains. Leaves sounded like whispering the arrival of Wallach and Stern, and spread the news to the reeds. All seemed to talk about it. This scenery described through sounds was what this century called as soundscape.⁷ The entire sounds were visual objects located in the sky that were audible everywhere. It means that those sounds or noises created the sound of environment within a space: such as trees, buildings and other materials placed in a urban or rural space (Nakagawa, p.105).

In the previous section, it has been described how the musical activities in Tanah Runcuk were strongly related to the body. In this case, body is not merely a corporeal entity, but also includes the mental entity. Our body is directly interacted with the world or environment. We can consider that the world is a part of our body. It means that body is not merely a visible body, instead, it has a much broader meaning (Nakagawa; p. 41).

The geographical condition constituting Tanah Runcuk was surely playing a great role in influencing the musics being lately produced within the society. Musical instruments which nowadays were considered as the extension of human body were hardly found in Tanah Runcuk. It indicates that they worked on their music in the most natural way, by using their bodies and what they had in their surroundings. Even though it has been recorded that reeds were one of their instruments,

⁷ Murraf Schaffer, a Canadian composer was the first man to use the word and conduct research on *soundscape*. The term derived from two words, namely *sound* and *scape*. *Sound* means any auditory effect, and *scape* is the abridgement of *landscape* which means scenery. This scenery of sound was initially done because Schaffer experienced a kind of disturbance from the unpleasant sounds in his surroundings. This research project aimed at achieving a better ambience of sound and avoiding us from noise pollution. It is also very useful to exercise our auditory ability.

there were different treatments in playing the instrument. Such instrument was used according to the value of its function as hair cleanser and they never kept the reeds. This is the very thing that was later more likely to deceive the researchers at the beginning.

From the aforementioned description, we would have guessed that their musical elements were limited to string instrument, with hair as its string. However, Wallach's note suggested another different evidence. It indicated the presence of percussive instruments within the music produced by Tanah Runcuk. As what has been commonly known, on the surface of Tanah Runcuk stood volcanoes. If the volcanoes were volatile, the people would directly adapt and placed the rumbling sound of the volcanoes as a percussive instrument. It can be read within the following poem written by Wallach.

*“What is happening to you, Karasdendam?
 Inside your chest
 that beats hard All men and women laid down the ground
 Like all anxieties and fatigue of mine
 Were laid and turned into songs
 Prayers whistled by all men
 And the one standing was calling from afar with its loud
 voice
 Trying to reach the sun What is happening to you, dear
 Karasdendam
 I heard your heartbeat within mine
 Inside my chest I wanted to be a child once more
 Dear mother
 Please embrace me”⁸*

In this case, Stern wrote in a clear and lucid manner:

“In the afternoon, Karasdendam flared up. Thuds heard from its bowels. It was predictable that I would encounter this. Women and men of Tanaruncuk laid down on the ground, whistling mellifluously. Their dulcet whistle played along with the thuds of Karasdendam. A man called out the sun

to postpone it from setting. No one knew how these entire occurrences were composed into a kind of melody, featuring the mountain thuds, human whistles, and shouts loaded of hope. It was marvelous. Like a prayer recited together, by the people feeling threatened, but imposing on the elements of the thing they predicted as a threat. It was astounding.”⁹

Another legible evidence related to their musical activities which concurrently showed that their power united with nature, as well as suggested the soundscape existing in the people of Tanah Runcuk, is the following writing of Wallach.

*“I am frequently lonely
 I am always alone
 But never have I been in a place as silent as this
 I heard the night skulked into my room
 In which I am living now is an overlay of silence
 A field of extreme silence
 The night before
 I heard my own breath
 The breath of a mother who lulled her child
 The breath of children sleeping in their mother’s embrace
 The breath rumbling from a father
 The breath of a bird
 The breath of a tree
 Turning into sounds inside my mind
 Lulling me deep
 But now,
 I hear nothing
 I only hear silence
 Although I am frequently lonely, although I am always
 alone,
 But not tonight*

I hear nothing But a cry
very long cry
A cry
coming from far, far away
I seek around
Nothing
 I seek into the depth of the forest
Nothing
 Still I hear
 A cry from afar A deep cry
 Very deep
 From the bottom of my heart"¹⁰

It describes that the night situation in Tanah Runcuk could be very quite that the sound of breath was audible. The sounds produced by the atmosphere of Tanah Runcuk could not certainly be categorized as transmittible music since the way people recorded it was just that simple. Nevertheless, it can still be comprehended as oral transmission of music, as occurred with fairy tale. Studies on fairy tale are surely common. This is the reason that urged us to conduct this oral music research towards a notation-less society.

Notation-less Society

The music being present among the people of Tanah Runcuk was hardly replicable in a way that resembles how it was present and played at that time. But it is not impossible to see it from a different perspective and generate a kind of music departing from it.

Elements such as musical instrument strongly depending on human body and nature can surely be uncomplicated to adapt and play. Unfortunately, neither Stern nor Wallach could ever describe the tones produced, or the melody. They described them by directly translating them into the feelings they encountered after listening to the music.

Of course, it is a certain obstacle in transcreating them into a specific form of music. In Western society, musical record-keeping and notation are crucial things to do. They play the music by reading the written notation. Their bodies move according to what has been written. In this case, the body is restrained to play the music only as written, it is not allowed to do different thing.

A society that transmits the music orally or the notation-less society typically play their music by using the entire capabilities of their bodies. No rules or restraints are written. What restrains them is the limitation of human body in relation to its being treated as a basic musical instrument.

However, it can still be a good thing, since the body works optimally and maximumly in playing its role as a musical instrument. No songs were exactly the same. All musics in Tanah Runcuk were incidental. The people responded lithely to occurences and natural phenomena. The aforementioned explanation definitely gives us an insight on how the body can be used at the greatest extent possible according to our need. How people could arrange a harmony, how hair could be producing sound, how whistle could reach the same frequency as the sound of mountain thud, and how the people of Tanah Runcuk could arrange a tempo that made their voices and the sounds of nature play along mellifluously.

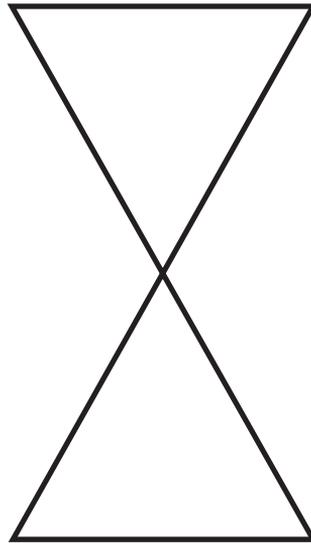
The long description attempts to show the relationship of music and cosmos, with human being in between. The concept of this trinity has been commonly found in the analyses on performances and traditional arts. The dualities that flank are night-day, sky-earth, ocean-mountain, and so on. In such condition, human is always in between those things.

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Arranging the Mosaic of Tanah Runcuk

Critiques and Comments



Pandu Yushina Adaba
Irham N. Anshari



(Archive of CTRS)

Memoir of Tanah Runcuk

A Little Note on the Hidden Map of the Everlasting Expedition¹

Pandu Yuhsina Adaba²

Mpu Nala never revealed the place to anyone, neither to Mahapatih³ Gajah Mada nor to Prabu⁴ Hayam Wuruk. He only took Majapahit's best shipwrights sailing once again to the place, without the companion crews who had accompanied him at the first time he landed therein. They all agreed to conceal the place because there grew a kind of tree with large diameter wood resistant to salt water. Several months following the eruption, Mpu Nala took the shipwrights to visit the area of the Island impacted by the volcanic eruption. Those ship crews never spoke any single word about the event. They understood that Majapahit would never be able to make another great ship.⁵

Introduction

When D. Kusbirin, the son of Prof. Dr. Lukman Sudjatmika, M.Si (one of senior staffs at CTRS) contacted me and asked for my opinion about Tanah Runcuk, I was stunned for a while. A little spark flashed in my brain. Tanah Runcuk. Why had it be that very name again? It is a name of a mysterious

1 A Response to Ludwig Stern and Kreuzer Wallach's Records. Not to be quoted.

2 Researcher at the Center for Economics and Local Development Analysis (CELDA).

3 Prime Minister.

4 King

5 S. Sukaris (2012); *Misteri Laksamana Nala; Empu Kapal Perang Majapahit (The Mystery of Admiral Nala; The Master of Majapahit's Battle Ship)*. Unpublished.

place, whose existence was in between mythical and scientific spaces. I acknowledged that some persons whom I am familiar with had conducted researches on this topic, but with very limited publication. Whether it was due to the sensitivity of the issue, or because the resonance of Tanah Runcuk's existence was indeed never been able to shake some spaces of scientific debate either in the realm of history, anthropology, or archaeology. Runcuk is a dark room on the corner of the scientific investigation's ray of light, particularly on the history of nusantara (archipelago). I frequently located it as a memory that was missing from the collective memories of nusantara.

Different Expeditions to Reveal the Exotic Mystery of Nusantara

There are many places or societies in nusantara located in the grey zone, which means that they have been recorded in history but later gone from contemporary academic discussions. A lot of myths had ignited the curiosity of researchers and explorers to conduct a series of action for the sake of answering such curiosity and at the same time revealing the mystery lying behind existing myths.

An example of the expeditions aiming at discovering the uniqueness of nusantara had been undergone since colonial era. It was Carl Alfred Block who explored the inland areas of Kalimantan (Borneo) in order to discover the race of tailed human, one of the legends in Dayak tribe. He was driven by his huge curiosity. Carl Block visited the Sultan of Kutai in Tenggarong in 1879. He was performing a task ordered by Governor-General Johan Van Lansberge to collect some data about the inland communities of Kalimantan. According to stories circulating at the time, the tailed humans (also known as *orang buntut* which literally means human with tail) inhabited the area around the settlement of the Sultan of Pasir and the bank of Teweh River. Carl Block did not manage to discover *orang buntut* in this journey. Alfred Russel Wallace called Carl Block's journey as a ludicrous event.⁶

6 M Yahandhi T (2014); *Pencarian Ras Manusia Berekor di Kalimantan*, online article in: <http://nationalgeographic.co.id/berita/2014/02/pencarian-ras-manusia-berekor-di-kalimantan> downloaded in 5 June 2014.

Michael Clark Rockefeller conducted a journey to the inland areas of Papua in order to study Asmat Tribe. The journey ended tragically by the researcher's disappearance. Some speculated that Michael Clark Rockefeller became the victim of Asmat's cannibalism. However, such speculation has not been properly clarified regarding many other possibilities such as wild animal attack or accident caused by the extreme landscape of Papua.

There are a lot of different myths and assumptions commonly believed in Indonesian society. One of them is the assumption that Madura Island is a desolate area. It is not more than a construct formed by colonial government in order to conceal their extreme cruelty and exploitation.

In the 17th century, Governor-General Maetsuyker used to report Madura's natural condition in the form of dense forest. Madura's dense forest corresponded with the folktales originating from the region, for example about Aryo Menak. A Madurese young man who were fond of going in and out of a forest. A work of a Madurese ancient poet entitled "*Bangsacara dan Ragapadmi*" tells about Madura's nature overgrown with thick forests in which deers and muntjacs lived. A massive logging for the sake of colonial government's business in the 19th century has changed the landscape of Madura into a barren area.

Some "Lost" Lands

There are several regions that used to exist but later were "gone" from the collective memories of Indonesian modern human. Nevertheless, our historical investigation in the past, particularly about colonial era, strongly depends on old archives that are mostly stored abroad. Discussion on Tanah Runcuk is not the sole existing issue. Therefore, before discussing Tanah Runcuk, it may be better to present some stories about similar areas.

It was Yasirole Island, a place which was told located on the east side of Indonesia. Records on the existence of the island might be traced in Walter Waltz' travel literature. He was a Swedish traveller who used to work in Koninklijke Paketvaart

Maatschappij (KPM—Royal Packet Navigation Company), a shipping company belonged to the Dutch Empire. In some cases, the record was quoted by historians discussing on the economic level of society living in the eastern hemisphere. The island became a justification for a society that was not familiar with the economy of commercial goods. Production of goods was done on the basis of subsistence and not of capital accumulation. The record on Yasirole Island's subsistence economy was frequently made as a justification for Marxist anthropologists to describe a real evidence of the phases of society's economic development according to Karl Marx's law of dialectic history movement.

The second location to discuss is Nagasaka Valley. A place which was told located in between two mountains, an area of the best coffee bean producer for global commodity in the 17th century. What made it unique is the story about the process of land inheritance, where the people only recognized the cultivation right title given to the manager/beneficiary for one generation only. If the manager died, the cultivation right would be returned to the local communities for a decision of future utilization. The local communities were known to be brave; some men living in that area were even able to conquer tiger barehanded. The note on this matter was written by a German anthropologist, Dirk Bulleck, who travelled along Java Island. Referring to the clue regarding its location, then the area was most likely located around Mount Merbabu-Merapi, or Mount Sindoro-Sumbing, or in between Mount Pangrango-Salak.

In the end, both Yasirole Island and Nagasaka Valley are now unexisting within contemporary administrative map. There are some possibilities regarding the issue. First, the note-writers might name the areas being discovered in their own language according to the impression they perceived. It might also be highly suspected that the island and valley written in those travellers' note have been named after another name. A similar pattern can be found for example in Geertz' work about *Santri*, *Priyayi*, and *Abangan* in Pare, Kediri. Geertz called that place as "Mojokutho".⁷

7 Clifford Geertz. (2013). *Agama Jawa; Santri-Priyayi-Abangan dalam Kebudayaan Jawa* (Jakarta: Komunitas Bambu).

Comments on Tanah Runcuk

Writings on Tanah Runcuk will inevitably refer to Stern and Wallach's records. Those two writers investigated a unique thing in the world of colonialism, namely: The establishment of local authority institution for the sake of colonial power's interest. It might be not much different from emerging symptoms in Indonesia in colonial era. Similar symptoms can be found in the writing of Jan Breman that reviewed colonial's benefit gained from forced labor in Priangan.⁸

In another study, Robert Van Niel also described a similar symptom happening in several regions in Java in the period of *cultuurstelsel*.⁹ It means that what Stern and Wallach recorded on the utilization of local authority institution for the sake of colonial's interest did not stand alone.

Comment (1):

The Economic System of Runcuk

In Stern and Wallach's records, it was mentioned that Orang Runcuk living in coastal area had interacted with foreign people from India, China, Arab, and Europe. It implies that the mode of trade within the society was quite advanced. It was also possible that capitalism (at least in its ancient form) had entered Tanah Runcuk. However, as it was customary in Asiatic mode of production happening in eastern hemisphere in that period, the 17th-18th centuries, subsistence production certainly still existed. It was in line with JH Boeke's finding about a society of dualistic economy which was a combination of two things: the development of capitalistic-based production to produce global commodities, and on the other side, some people in the society still produced for daily need self-sufficiency (not for commercial goods/global commodities).¹⁰

Another face of Orang Runcuk recorded by Stern and Wallach is Inland Orang Runcuk (*Orang Runcuk Pedalaman*). Based

8 Jan Breman. (2014). *Keuntungan Kolonial dari Tanam Paksa*. (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia).

9 Robert Van Niel. (2003). *Sistem Tanam Paksa di Jawa*. (Jakarta: LP3ES).

10 JH Boeke. (1983). *Pra-Kapitalisme di Asia*. (Jakarta: Pustaka Sinar Harapan)

on the note, Inland Orang Runcuk were still nomadic. In this case, what to notice is the fact that within the same landscape there were two different modes of production but they could concurrently exist. While Coastal Orang Runcuk had performed global commodities trade and interacted with different traders from all over the world, Inland Orang Runcuk still produced for the sake of fulfilling their basic needs. It is strongly suspected that if such mode of production gained some surplus, it would not be accumulated for investment, instead it would be considered as merely an anticipation towards unexpected condition (for example bad weather, crop failure, famine, and natural hazard).

To analyze the data from Stern and Wallach's records, the description written in the records are definitely inadequate. As common anthropologic writing, the note should contain the information on the shape of housing, building architecture, and the function of each part of the building, thus it might be processed into a deeper analysis on the economic pattern that shaped housing pattern and architecture used by the people of Runcuk.¹¹

It was a thing we can still commonly find in NTT. The area of Mollo Mountains (administratively a region of Timor Tengah Selatan District) can still give us some insight on the traditional houses (called as *Loppo*) which were designed as residence and barn concurrently. Harvest surplus were as much as possible stored as food reserve for them to survive lean months. Crop trading for the sake of commercial needs had occurred at that time, but in small amount.

Barter system applied by the inland people of Runcuk hardly received adequate review. Stern and Wallach's records only stated that the coastal people of Runcuk had been long performing international commodity exchange. Description on the model of exchange performed by the inland people of Runcuk will be considered mysterious if we refer to the isolated nature of the spatial topography of Runcuk. A unique comparative note might be found in Maurice Godelier's work

11 Related to this aspect, the expert team of CTRS has conducted some analyses and data processing to be able to visualize Stern and Wallach's manuscripts which used to (although a little) make mention of settlement pattern and architecture. For the beginning, CTRS investigated the community of Orang Runcuk Dalam (Aom People) who lived exclusively. Writing on this issue can also be read in Chapter II, entitled "Reading the Pattern of Aom People Settlement in Tanah Runcuk's Triangle of Death" (by Gata Mahardika).

discussing Baruya People in Papua New Guinea. The note described that Baruya People still maintained barter system, but in their true nature, they used salt as the counterweight for bartering goods with different value of utility.¹²

Comment (2): Religious System

What Stern and Wallach recorded only made a little review on the religious system of Coastal Orang Runcuk (Stern and Wallach called them Orang Runcuk Luar). The note also stated that Orang Runcuk Luar were highly religious in worshipping. They were monotheistic and at the same time believed in a lot of superstitions. The note did not mention the superstitions in detail. It certainly needs other sources as comparison to analyze the religious system of Coastal Orang Runcuk. The most possible way is to find its equivalent existing in other regions during the same period of time.

On the other side, Stern and Wallach's record also mentioned only least information on the religious system of Orang Runcuk living in inland areas. The note recorded that Orang Runcuk who lived in inland areas still had faith in beliefs resembling animism and dynamism. It was because they had only minimal contact with the outside world. However, the condition changed when colonial's interest expanded its agricultural investment to inland areas (the mid 17th century).

We might have the insight on transition from Javanese rationality to mysticism through a novel written by Pramoedya Ananata Toer entitled *Arus Balik*. In the work, implicitly Pram portrayed the change of society's religious system from Hindu-Buddha to Islam where it was also influenced by the conflict of either mythology or regulations on values, history, and regulations existing within each religion.¹³

12 Maurice Godelier, translated by Robert Brain. (1977). *Perspective in Marxist Anthropology*. (Cambridge: Cambridge Press)

13 Pramoedya Ananta Toer. (1995). *Arus Balik*. (Jakarta: Hasta Mitra)

What is Missing from the Note?

We can literally say that Stern and Wallach's records on Orang Runcuk contain only few information. What they recorded gives only a little review on kinship system. With such minimal information, the note states that: Orang Runcuk adhered to patriarchal system. There were no further explanation about their marriage system, pattern of settlement, life necessity exchange pattern, and so on.

There should be a series of further research towards Orang Runcuk to complete the mosaics of knowledge about Tanah Runcuk. For the sake of it, researcher must perform investigation on colonial archives. And it is surely a long process of struggling.

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(Archive of CTRS)

Archive, A Reality of Power and the Other

Irham N. Anshari

To comprehend the lengthy project of the Centre for Tanah Runcuk Studies (CTRS), initially I have to propose an appropriate perspective to apply. This entire project posts some questions about archive, which thereupon lead us to the question of “what is reality?” Boris Groys comes up with an interesting thought in regard to this topic¹. For a quite long period of time, we have been understanding all texts contained in media, all historical records in archives, as representation. In this case, representation is interpreted as the second layer beneath the reality. Thus what matters is who can guarantee the existence of reality? According to Groys, reality is not more than a group of things unrecorded in archives. Hence, it is instead reality that occupies the second layer coming after the archives—it is because archives are not more than the representation of other archives.

At a glance, Groys’ idea seemed to be complicated. However, it is very relevant for the sake of reflecting, for example, our visit to a museum. While observing some archives of colonial drawing about the situation of the colonies around 5 centuries ago, we often imagine how the illustrator captured certain reality into drawings. But, is that how things really work? Are the drawings the representation of reality? Actually, it can not be firmly answered. What we can be sure of is the fact that the existing illustration within the drawings is not the reality itself. The reality of the colonies is every single

thing unexisting in the drawings, something we imagine after looking at the drawings, something which will not be anyhow defined as fixed and definite.

Visiting the archive exhibition of CTRS, apparently the visitors will be conditioned to read the colonial era legacy in the form of archives regarding a certain region in the archipelago: Tanah Runcuk. Bearing in mind that the archipelago spans a very wide extent and it is impossible to memorize all regions, Tanah Runcuk seems like a forgotten land, yet the land which “turns out” to be containing various important, unique, and mystic stories. Who would not be attracted after realizing that Tanah Runcuk has a history of unique animal called Runcuk Horses? By means of a mildewy black and white photograph archive, we can clearly see a horse whose head is in the shape of a megaphone.

Runcuk horses must lead the audience to curiosity, did such species of horse really exist? What do other stories about the horses tell? How was the reality of the horses back then? And furthermore, some other questions from different layer arise: Were those real horses? Did people make up these stories? Is it a manipulated photograph? Right at this point, archive is no longer an adequate answer for us to understand the reality. On the contrary, archive triggers us to shape and question the reality concurrently. The questions of the first layer present different issues from those of the second layer. As we go deeper into the second layer, the problem shifts from the representation of stories embodied in the text to the very medium of the old photograph. To say it in other words: the medium turns into a significant site in understanding the reality beyond the images exhibited by the CTRS.

CTRS, A Lengthy Project

The project of CTRS began in 2014 as a part of the Memoir of Tanah Runcuk exhibition. A mini museum was presented; it displayed a collection of archives which are the legacy of Ludwig Stern, whom the stories told as having explored Tanah Runcuk. Other than exhibition, the first project also published the journal *Malalongke* containing ethnographic records of Tanah Runcuk. At the end of the journal, an epilogue is placed

as a disclaimer that reveals the project as mere fictions. CTRS as an institution, and other articles in the journal *Malalongke*, were adopted for the sake of legitimizing a project of the artist Timoteus Anggawan Kusno.²

What is captivating is that the creative practices in collaboration with Angga's fictional project did not end in 2014. In the following year, another related project entitled *Anatomy of the (Lost) Memory – Collective Remembering through Institutional Art* was presented in a collective exhibition called *Limalan* taking place at *Cemeti Art House*. This time, Angga did not explicitly employ the institution of CTRS. Instead, he used a pseudonym, *Daliho Kusbirin*, to be the caretaker of the displayed archives. The name *Daliho Kusbirin* could be found in the previous *Journal Malalongke* as the author of a science-fiction writing about the *Mythology of Runcuk Horses*. Regarding this name, Angga—also familiarly known as *Dalijo*—clarified in an article of a mass media that the name *Daliho* derived from a mistaken pronunciation of his nickname by a Spanish friend.³

The pennant of CTRS was raised once again in 2016 in a project entitled *Tropika Selekt: Echoes from Terra Incognita*. The initiative was developed from an experience of collective exhibition in the *Ark Galerie* under the theme of *Masculinity*. This project concerned with some archives in regard to the issues of body and gender of *Tanah Runcuk* people. The name *Daliho Kusbirin* once again appeared here, ignoring all confessions Angga had made in the past. The project which was also exhibited in *Sullivan + Strumpf*, Singapore, again, presented the CTRS typical figure of *Runcuk Horse*.

“The Untold Stories of Archipelago”, another project of the CTRS, presented as a part of the *Power and Other Things* exhibition, will be the final project of CTRS. On one side, this fictional idea is worthy of examination within different frames—in this context, in *Brussel, Belgium*. While on the other side, maybe this very project should be brought to an end, bearing in mind as a medium, it is gradually losing its aspect of “secret”, the very aspect taking the audience to curiosity and question about reality. Of course, the representations to display are completely different; and the stories to tell are new. This time, Angga engineered a story of *Rampokan (Siluman)*

Macan tradition in Tanah Runcuk. It raises a question: do we still need to conceal a certain idea under a fiction? Or is it still necessary to cover the fictional with the discovered archives?

Fictional History, a Representation of Idea

In the history of art, an art project of fictional institution, like the CTRS, is not something new. In the late 1990s, an artist named Walid Raad created a fictional foundation called The Atlas Group. Under the label of The Atlas Group, Raad presented his works that talk about the civil war in Lebanon. The archive-like artworks were attributed with some appropriate dates and admitted as the donation from several parties.⁴ Preceding the time when The Atlas Group was known as a fictional institution, Raad usually came as the representative of the foundation and attempted to raise the issues of the civil war in Lebanon through some dialogues as well as question and answer sessions. For Raad, this performance is an attempt to present the history as something which is not necessarily chronological based on time and event. Otherwise, it is an abstraction of various discourses and ways in comprehending existing data all over the world.

Borrowing Jacques Ranciere's slogan, "The real must be fictionalized in order to be thought"⁵, the utilization of fictional institution seems, in this case, a choice of disguise used to talk about the reality. But if we refer back to Groys' idea, all archives are representation. All archives, either labelled as fictional or factual, will basically trigger the audience to imagine the reality. At this point, it does not matter anymore to label the project of CTRS as fictional or factual. In practice, the CTRS has been consistently operating for four years. What is important in this final line shifts to the texts, the images of reality in the colonies, not only in the colonial era but also in the post-colonial time.

In understanding the last project of CTRS, we should switch from comprehending the medium to grasping both the poetic (semiotics) and political (discourse) representations of the text. Angga introduced the story of Rampokan (Siluman) Macan tradition in Tanah Runcuk, the one which is different from the Rampogan Macan commonly known to occur in

Java. In Java, the figure of tiger was the central point that was Othered. Meanwhile in the version of Tanah Runcuk, it was a tiger-masked human that was Othered. With such tiger mask, the “tiger” deserved to be judged by other humans. This make-up story brings about a reflection towards the universal condition of society in which marginalization is a daily grind. In Indonesia, take some cases for example, the mass are eager for judging someone frontally right after labelling their target as “Dukun Santet” (shaman), “Kafir” (infidel, unbeliever), “PKI” (Communist) or even “Cina” (Chinese).

In regard to the situation of presenting this project in Europe, maybe we can take this notion of Othering into the colonial and post-colonial contexts. The history frequently leads us to imagine a black-and-white reality of the colonies, about how the white colonized the black. This imagined reality brings a quite similar post-colonial impact, for example the slogans of nationalism and antforeignism. Looking at one of Angga’s artworks titled *Power and the Other (things)*, we can see a figure of a nobleman sitting at the same level as the cannon as pointing his finger to the tiger-masked man. It is the moment when archive takes me to the imagination of reality. A black-and-white reality, which is not between the colonizer and the indigenous. Maybe this is the reality occupying the position of the main idea in Angga’s artworks. The reality we should be continuously suspicious of, regardless any racial or national identity: the reality between the ruler (Power) and the Other.

End Notes

1 Boris Groys. 2012. *Under Suspicion, The Phenomenology of Media*. Columbia University Press.

2 Irham Nur Anshari 2014. “Memoar dari Ingatan yang Hilang”, in Malalongke. Centre for Tanah Runcuk Studies.

3 Anang Zakaria. 2015. “Sepotong Arca yang Mengecoh” in Koran Tempo, 25 June.

4 Alan Gilbert. 2016. “Walid Raad’s Spectral Archive, Part One: Historiography as Process” in e-flux journal #69

5 Jacques Ranciere. 2004. *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*. Continuum.

DISCLAIMER

MEMOIRS OF TANAH RUNCUK [2014]¹—TRACING THE MYSTERY OF TUGU GONO MANGGALA SANGID [2015] —TROPIKA SELEKTA: ECHOES FROM “TERRA INCOGNITA” [2016]²—UNTOLD STORIES OF THE ARCHIPELAGO [2017] are an art project which manufactures (fictional) studies. These studies—‘conducted’ by Centre for Tanah Runcuk Studies—are raising discussions on a ‘lost’ territory called Tanah Runcuk. Tanah Runcuk is a territory that was predicted as part of the archipelago in Dutch East Indies. The discourse on Tanah Runcuk was claimed to be lost in order to conceal the corruption in colonial administrative that mingled with feudalistic system in 19th century.

CENTRE FOR TANAH RUNCUK STUDIES (CTRS) is a fictional study centre initiated by artist Timoteus Anggawan Kusno. CTRS works collaboratively with researches, historians, anthropologist, film-directors, musicians, and scholars. This study centre works interdisciplinary, in order to construct the idea of “Tanah Runcuk”—as a ‘lost’ territory in Dutch East Indies—as a question to respond the way history is (re)produced, read, and ‘taken’ in its relativity with certain power, hegemony.

Drawings, dramaturgs, naratology (directed/by) Timoteus Anggawan Kusno under pseudonym “Centre for Tanah Runcuk Studies” and all its components.

Written by Timoteus Anggawan Kusno, Windu W. Jusuf, Irfan R. Darajat, Gata Mahardika, Rio Belvage, Pandu Yushina Adaba, Irham Nur Anshari in collaboration with Maria Puspitasari Munthe (translator, editor)

¹ MEMOIRS OF TANAH RUNCUK editorial & production collaborators are Windu W. Jusuf, Irfan R. Darajat, Gata Mahardika, Pandu Yushina Adaba, Rio Belvage, Sanusi, Hafiz Supriharjo, Bonggal Hutagalung, Mosescrue, Yasin Azhari, Sarwoto Kotot Presented & performed in Kedai Kebun Forum, Indonesia. Curated by Irham Nur Anshari

² TROPIKA SELEKTA: ECHOES FROM TERRA INCOGNITA production collaborators are Krack! Studio, Studiomahtati Indonesia, Tedjo Klysk, DGTMB Art Embroidery, Juwara Studio, Batik Winotosastro, Tony Albert. Presented & performed in Ark Glerie (Curated by Alia Swastika, Indonesia, 2016) and Sullivan+Strumpf (written by G. Budi Subanar, Singapore, 2016)

³ UNTOLD STORIES OF THE ARCHIPELAGO production collaborators are Didon & co., Beni Arjuna, Deni Yulistira, Gata Mahardika, Franciscus Apriwan, Gardika Gigih, Maria Puspitasari, Michael Adi Candra, Albertus Harimurti, Irham N. Anshari, Studio Mahtati Indonesia Presented by MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND EDUCATION REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA in EUROPALIA ARTS FESTIVAL (Curated by Charles Esche and Riksa Afiaty, Belgium, 2017)

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Again, please read, reread, and distrust the text carefully.

Some scholars have regarded it as the fairy tale of the colonialists who “failed to move on”. Some other groups even comprehended Tanah Runcuk as a science-fiction enthusiasm like the story of Atlantis. While within the rest—regardless of the fact that some people even never heard of this name at all—was entrenched a great curiosity; it encouraged the attempt of tracking and arranging the rubble of this very story originating from the “lost” land.

Tanah Runcuk that used to be a subject of intense debates among the scholars, is getting more interesting to be discussed again due to its being within an in-between space. Between presence and absence, between fiction and reality, between fantasy and history. Precisely, Centre for Tanah Runcuk Studies intends to read the discourse of Tanah Runcuk which occupies a realm between myth and science with the approaches of art project and interdisciplinary study. Instead of drawing a conclusion and producing a single interpretation, this effort expects to open a dialogue and alternative entry in approaching the discourse of Tanah Runcuk.