
MEMENTO MORI:
AN INTRODUCTION
TO TROPIKA SELEKTA



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CENTRE FOR
TANAH RUNCUK
STUDIES

Centre for Tanah Runcuk Studies'
Bureau of Translation and Interpretation

**MEMENTO MORI:
AN INTRODUCTION
TO TROPIKA SELEKTA**

PROCESSED BY
DRS. DALIHO KUSBIRIN

BASED ON THE MANUSCRIPTS OF
CHATEAUBRIAND
BARTJAN VAN DER BUNT
LUDWIG STERN
KREUZER WALLACH

THIS SCRIPT HAS BEEN PARTIALLY PRESENTED IN
MEMOIR OF TANAH RUNCUK:
A NOTE FROM THE 'LOST' LAND (2014)
TROPIKA SELEKTA:
ECHOES FROM 'TERRA INCOGNITA' (2016)

FOREWORD:
NURLELA FÜSUN

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STUDIES

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Memento Mori: an Introduction to Tropika Selektā

CENTRE FOR TANAH RUNCUK STUDIES

1. TANAH RUNCUK - COLONIALISM - HISTORY 2. ORIENTALISM - OCCIDENTALISM - ETHNOGRAPHY
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CANNIBALE RO- -YALE.

CANNIBALE ROYALE, MAGASIN GROTESQUE, 1825
archive of Centre for Tanah Runcuk Studies



Fig. 1. The master took his bride to the throne.

Editorial

This simple publication is released as a complementary text for the presentation of ‘Tropika Seleкта: Echoes from ‘Terra Incognita’ project, a collaborative work between the Centre for Tanah Runcuk Studies (CTRS) and artist Timoteus Anggawan Kusno. In this publication, CTRS compares the result of Tanah Runcuk visual archives replication to numerous pieces of letter that have been managed to be put in restoration by CTRS’ Bureau of Translation and Interpretation led by Drs. Daliho Kusbirin.

Several separated fragments of letters collected in this “Memento Mori” publication are indeed indirectly presenting ‘the lost narratives’ on the incident of the genocide of Orang Runcuk dalam —nota bene, which becomes the underlying frame of Tropika Seleкта project. Nevertheless, this publication is worth reading as a bridge connecting the previous project of CTRS, i.e. *Memoir of Tanah Runcuk* (2014), to *Tropika Seleкта* (2016).

Through the stories piled within, CTRS intends to invite you readers to trace back the larger context of the matters of exploitation (upon/by) indigenous people, of alienation, and of the power relation (of colonial-feudal) operating in Tanah Runcuk—as well as how it was connected to the political dialectics in the European Continent and ‘global’ trade at that time. Things are getting more interesting because here we may trace such tension intimately; through the most personal perspective of a few alienated ‘Whites’ (instead) through times in ‘Tanah Runcuk’. Reading the writings in Memento Mori inevitably reminds me of Max Havelaar, the masterpiece of Multatuli, written in Belgia in the late 19th century—the same period as of Stern’s journey in Tanah Runcuk.

Arrayed in this Memento Mori, mourning and admiration of Chateaubriand, the one called as the father of French Romanticism. Chateaubriand self-proclaimed stepping down on Tanah Runcuk (or what he called as Rundjuq) through his love letter for Madame Desbaresdes. Three pieces of those love letters were unintentionally found in a library in Penang (1961), and later published by Gallimard Publisher in 1969 in Chateaubriand’s chrestomathy: “Oeuvres Romanesques et Voyages”. Moreover, there was one piece of letter wrapped in a unique code of Bartjan van der Bunt (1790) inscribed in a manuscript discovered in the shipwreck “Welvaren” in 2002 by a group of philanthropist who was looking for treasures. The last—and the most intensive—source of this Memento Mori is surely processed from Ludwig Stern’s manuscript of his

personal journal 'Per Fidem Intrepidus'. Stern's note that tends to be in ethnographic style, recorded his journey with Kreuzer Wallach in Tanah Runcuk, before he was eventually lost without any trace in the late 19th century—the crucial period of economy liberalization in Nederlandsch-Indië after the Java War.

We observe that the limited data and imagination are the challenges to be solved in the implementation of this project. Hence, from the very beginning we deliberately open up in order to be able to involve expert team outside our institution within an interdisciplinary framework. Praise be to God, as after a long process starting from 2013, CTRS can eventually invite particularly several researchers, writers, academicians, architects, artists, music analysts, and film-makers to get involved in the process of interpreting CTRS's archives. Thus, we hope that the discoursing process we conducted may indeed be more contextual and appropriate with the needs of the times.

For their participation, we would like to thank Beatrice L. Jingga, Lukman Sudjatmika, Zamrud Timur, Irfan R. Darajat, Windu W. Jusuf, Rio Belvage, Pandu Yushina Adaba, Gata Mahardika, and Irfham Nur Anshari who worked together with us in 2014 for the writing and publishing of Jurnal Malalongke (officially launched in November in Kedai Kebun Forum, Yogyakarta concurrently with Memoir of Tanah Runcuk Ethnography Exhibition).

To slightly continue the story, we have been working on Tropika Selekt project since in the mid of 2015, and from the beginning we have committed to frame it in artistic approach. It was due to the abundant data (related to the genocide of indigenous people and agrarian policy) disappearing (being disappeared) under the surveillance of soldiers, noblemen, and cartel wolf of 'Tanah Runcuk'.

We believe that artistic approach may provide larger space to conduct interpretation with less restraint. At the same time, we hope that this step will also be able to create opportunity and space for us to 'meet' and re-read the history, as well as our collective memories in a more dialogous and relective instead of didactic and rigid manner. At last, happy explo-it/re-ing Tanah Runcuk!

Nurlela Füsun
Director
Centre for Tanah Runcuk Studies

Tropika Seleкта: Echoes from ‘Terra Incognita’

*“...Rundjuque might be buried
under the rapid pace of trade and
‘in short’ memory!
Along with it, gone would be several varieties of
rare plants, god, and love stories... [manuscript
interrupted]” **

In the series of Tropika Seleкта, Timoteus collaborated in particular with the Centre for Tanah Runcuk Studies (CTRS). This project was collaboratively engineered in an artistic approach, as an attempt to re-imagine and re-describe the lost archives of CTRS collection. Those unpublished pieces of CTRS’ archives were mostly about a series of indigenous land deprivation, forced disappearance, and genocide ‘feast’ towards Orang Runcukdalam. This colossal incident loaded with power of running amok¹ & intrigues was celebrated by the entire ‘mass of people’, and mobilized by a number of brown-skinned noblemen with weapons granted by the Dutch Company since early 17th century—and continually occurred that it became a natural thing hitherto; however in different ‘body’ and field.

¹ The word ‘amok’ is a loan word originated in Malay/Indonesian language. It refers to a harsh frenzy done by a person uncontrollably—it is even sometimes associated with spiritual being that drives the person to perform harmful act. Its use in English then is at the risk of being problematic. Since in its early appearance within English script, the word was used by the explorers (or colonials) visiting non-Western world who encountered such occurrence.

In the study, CTRS found that this genocide towards a group of society had obliterated 'the archives' and the memory room attached in the body of Orang Runcukdalam. The genocide was in the end able to grease the massive land clearing, and the uniformity of plantation commodities in Tanah Runcuk. Therefore it is not impossible, that inside the cup of sweet tea I brew while finishing this writing, dissolved the blood and sweat of any body collapsed in "Tanah Runcuk".

Drs. D. Kusbirin
Head of Centre for Tanah Runcuk Studies'
Bureau of Translation & Interpretation

*) A fragment of this "prophecy" was written by Ludwig Stern in his daily journal *Per Fidem Intrepidus*—a relic that had been managed to be identified before it was eventually lost in Tanah Runcuk.



Fig. 2. *Amicitiae nostrae memoriam spero sempiternam fore.*
(I hope that the memory of our friendship will be everlasting.)





“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.”

Chateaubriand in “Letters from Penang”
(year unknown)



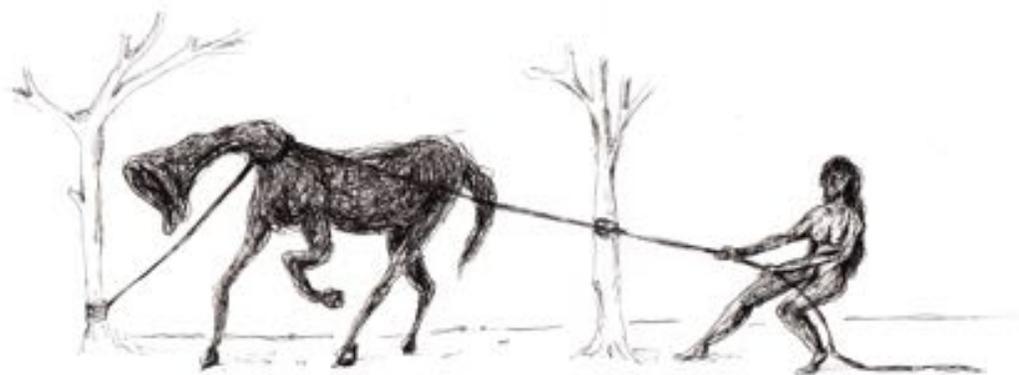
“Not long after we got back from the remote land, came the hearsay that the horses were dead. I am clueless about how much those horses were worthy. You know, the horses are more precious when they are dead. They deserved to die. Men of Rundjuq process horse’s heart for their ritual, and fight over its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

Chateaubriand in “Letters from Penang”
(year unknown)



“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.”

Chateaubriand in “Letters from Penang”
(year unknown)



“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 withered: they completed the dreams of my life, and their names were written on my diary behind the door of the tomb.”

Chateaubriand in “Letters from Penang” (1790)



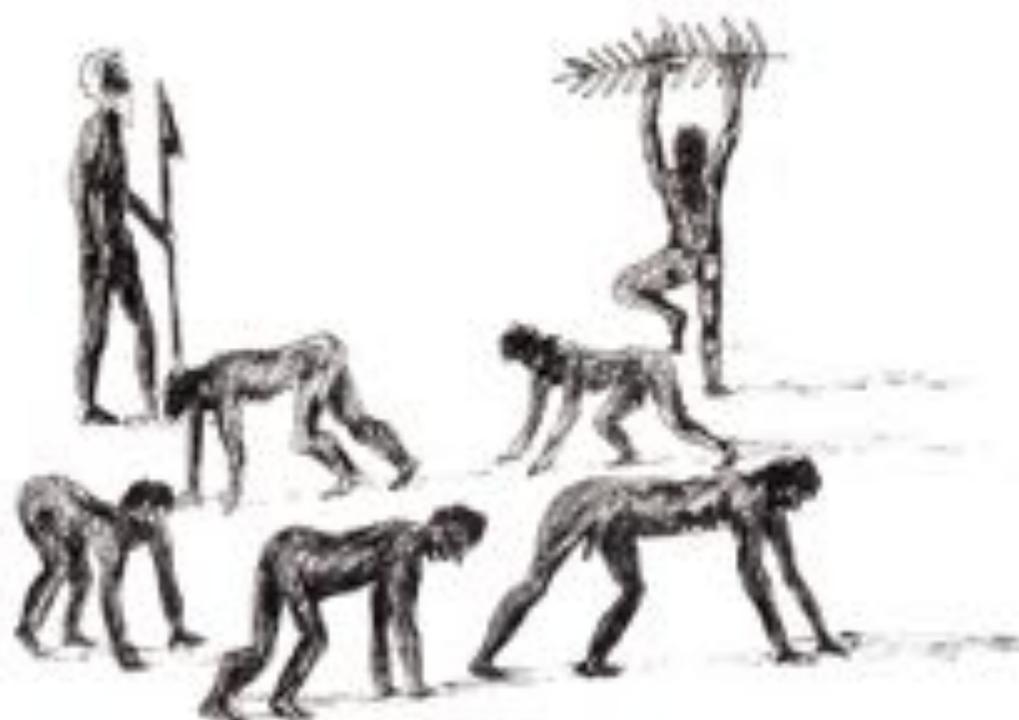
“A number of VOC’s conservative authorities smelled something fishy from the left-wing movement radical upheaval heating up in France.

They, the decrepit aristocrats, are counting every single span of (French) revolution rage gesture. This very outbreak is believed to impact the political constellation of Europe, including the Dutch Empire.

I have heard they said: a ‘strategic retreat’ had been prepared; even before the battle coming under their noses, thousands miles away from defeat!

How disgraceful!”

Bartjan van der Bunt (I790),
A manuscript found in “Welvaren”
wrecked ship in 2002



"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"

Kreuzer Wallach, hidden letters (1865)



“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.

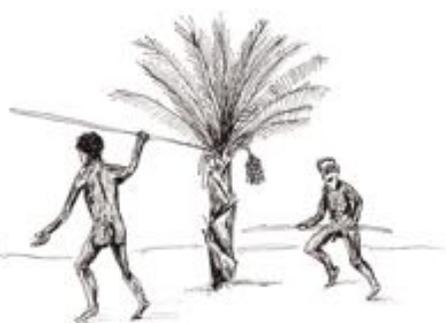
A man called out the sun to postpone it
from setting. No one knew how these entire
occurrences were composed into a kind of
melody, featuring the mountain thuds, human
whistles, and shouts loaded of hope.

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.”

Ludwig Stern, “Per Fidem Intrepidus” (1865)

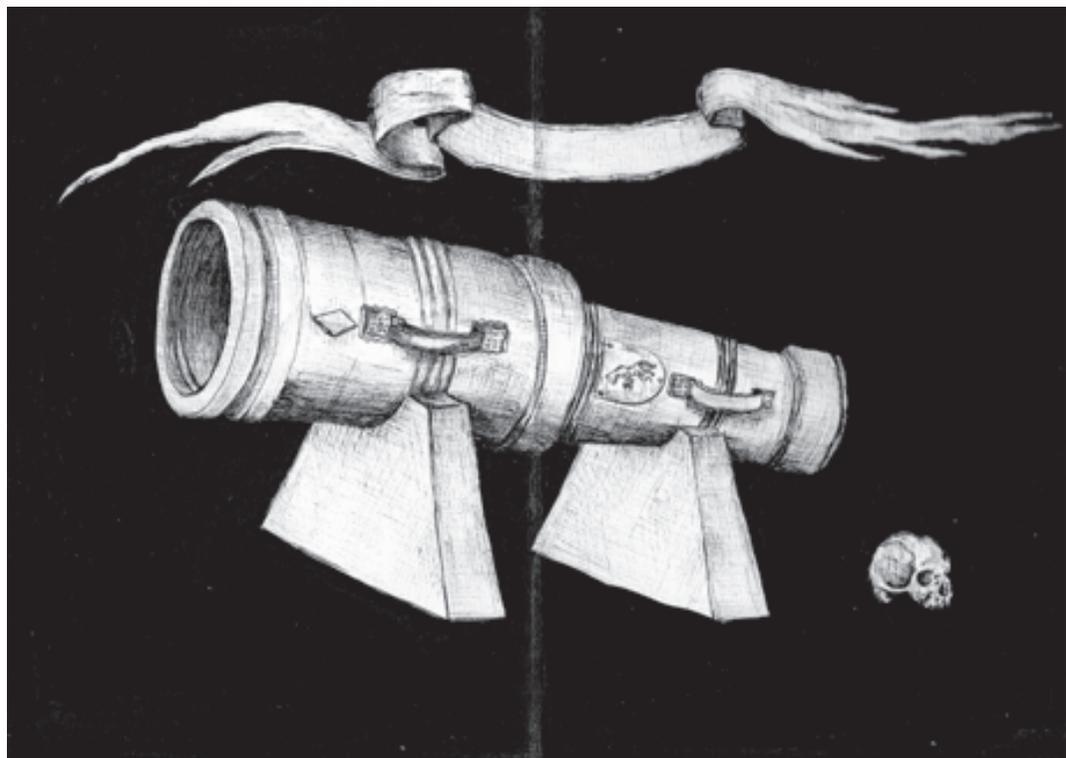


“I observed them from afar.
I had no guts to intrude into the
crowd. The yells of barefooted men,
they ran beseiging the luckless horse!
I didn't know. Who was the animal? Who
was human? It was not due to the dust
shrouding my eyes, but because everyone
had obliterated under their bloodlust.
Ah.....

Shaman said that the shrilling horse
was the oldest, this was the one that
would accompany his grandfather's
spirit to the feast of gods. Gods would
protect his entire descendants under
from the wrath of Kwaruncing. Later
afore the dusk, those who lived would
have been drunk in carouse and prayer;
with a headless horse; whose heart they
believed to enhance their faith and
virility.

I want to leave erelong. I am longing
for Bach lost in Cello Suite No.I”

Ludwig Stern, “Per Fidem Intrepidus”
(1866)



“Those whites turned into completely different figures in this blazing land. Did the temperature of Runcuk thaw those brains with instinct on trading, and evaporate their feelings? They have mortified the exquisite melodies, the stirring dramas, and arousing paintings of their motherland! I am feeling unmerited of being here.”

Ludwig Stern, “Per Fidem Intrepidus”
(1868)



“The Enlightenment did not manage to save them from the dark power of the coffers of gold. The carnivorous flowers and the smell of carcass were more evident than the bestiality of human. I start to love this place. Strange sounds, forest guardian spirits, nocturnal animals, giant damp roots, mossy rocks. Please embrace me.”

Ludwig Stern, “Per Fidem Intrepidus”
(1866)



“The chant of the waterfall at the edge of the jungle is still playing inside my head. I am still bashful whenever the sun peeps at me behind wet leaves. I am feeling like a child once again. I can sense the intangible energy within the jungle. Despite its being frightening, I can never gainsay, this fear is the sole thing I can believe.

I am crazed enough seeing horses headless. I couldn't manage to make sense of those secret plans and trickery. This powerlessness was saved by the embrace of the forest and the phantoms that brought me back to my childhood.”

Ludwig Stern, “Per Fidem Intrepidus”
(1866)



Malalongke Pacah Mantra,
recited on a full moon before the hunt:

“hai'ing khu mawe' mi ka lamm
ka lang ho

Ule'kaba sok malalongke'
sokmelaka bo

Poh raham ka amogan Jaran
jaraga amogan

He' lammo thakka are'nnemo
thak ka lang

Irakkanne sak kai'ii matalong
ka long kamogan

Nahha eo kai pacah matalong thak
ka lang

Ampo ale'kaba sok malalongke'
sokmelaka bo

Haiing khu mawe'mi'ka lamm
ka lang ho”

Ludwig Stern, “Per Fidem Intrepidus”
(year unknown)



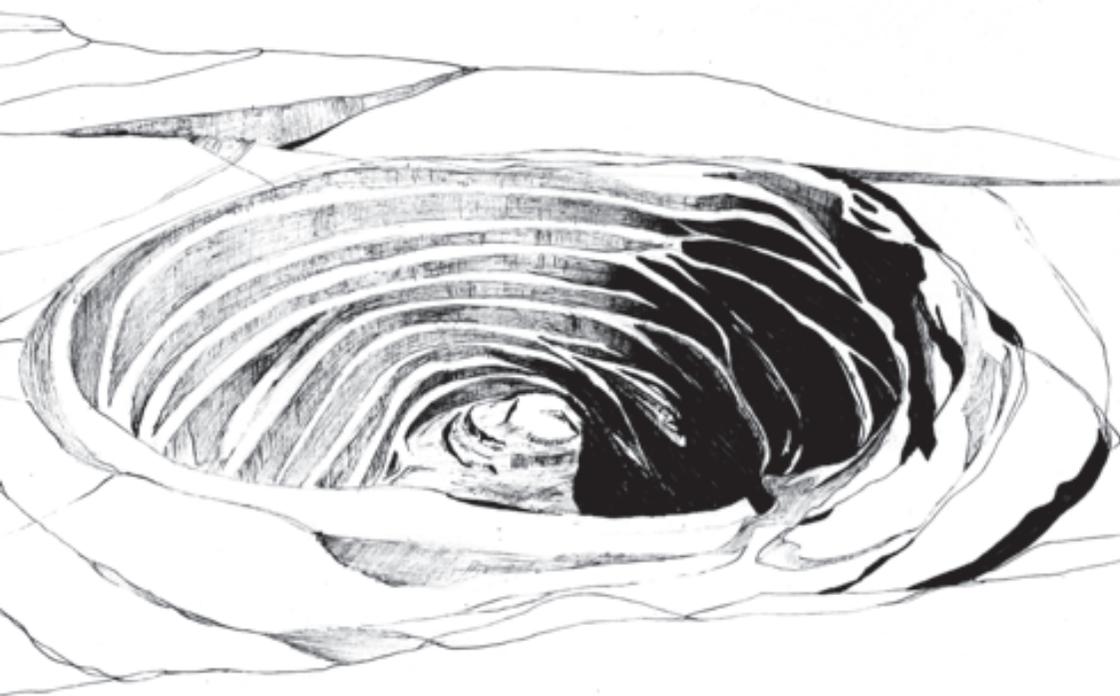
“A special officer of confidential treaty with hidden agenda, had offered me eight coffers of ‘Santalum album’ fruit and a guarantee of safety. God had allowed himself to become a human; and human blatantly stole His crown.

The life of mine is thinner before my compatriots rather than before a starving giant feline in the bowels of The Ceaseless Mountains.

I must jot down and announce the things unseen to me as truth, for the sake of security!

May you be anointed with gunpowder.”

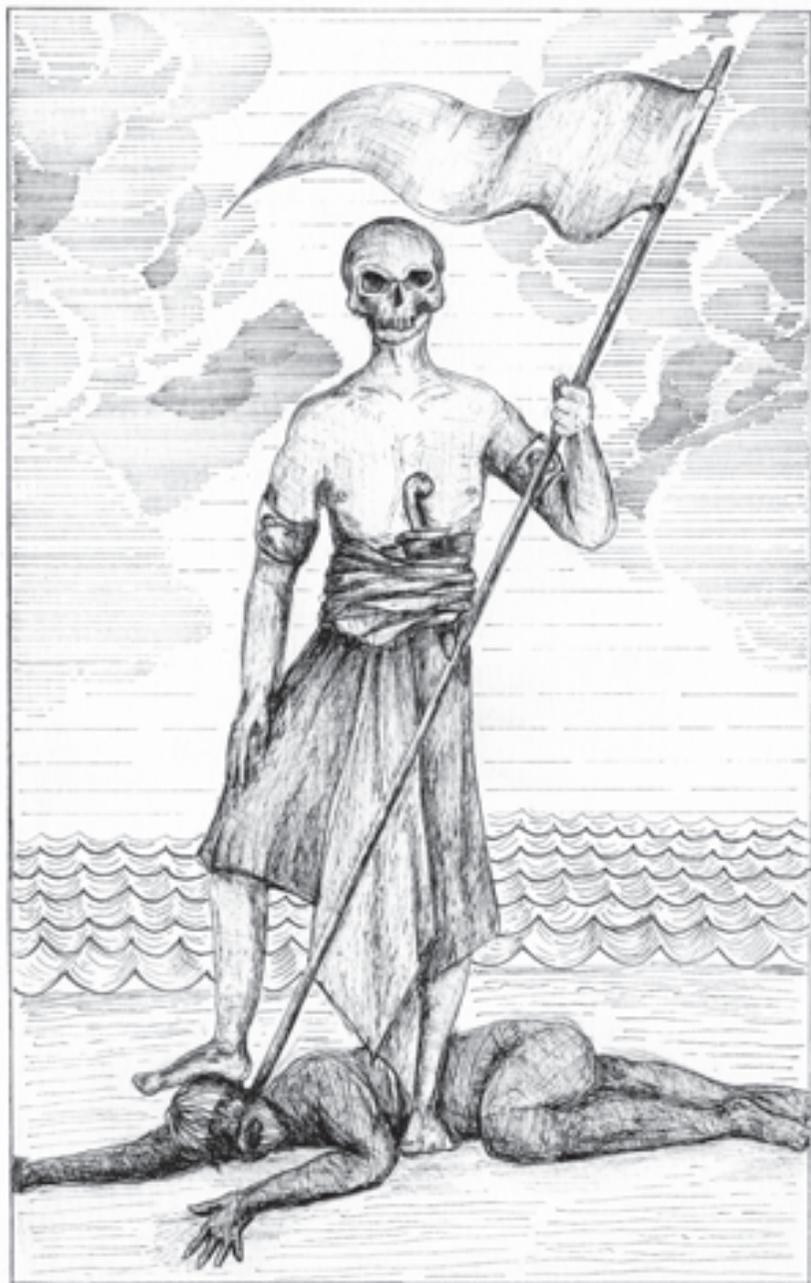
Ludwig Stern, “Per Fidem Intrepidus”
(1867)



“The brown men have thrown some party
with European dance. Drunk intensely
in the aroma of the wine aged much
older than their mothers. An exchange
exalted in the name of god, and the
gold of the land baptized by the sweat
I of those who prayed without
speaking.

I am afraid of getting inured and
ruined.”

Ludwig Stern, “Per Fidem Intrepidus”
(1870)



“These brown men
really loved to talk about
the metal weapons flying;
The mantras dissapearing;
Or a giant cat without mottle showing.

In the midst of such hubbub,
a fleet was crossing,
ambling, merchanting, late night staying, cheered as
promising

By lifting up the grail of wine,
let their own selves drunk inside the antics of
arrack and arenga.

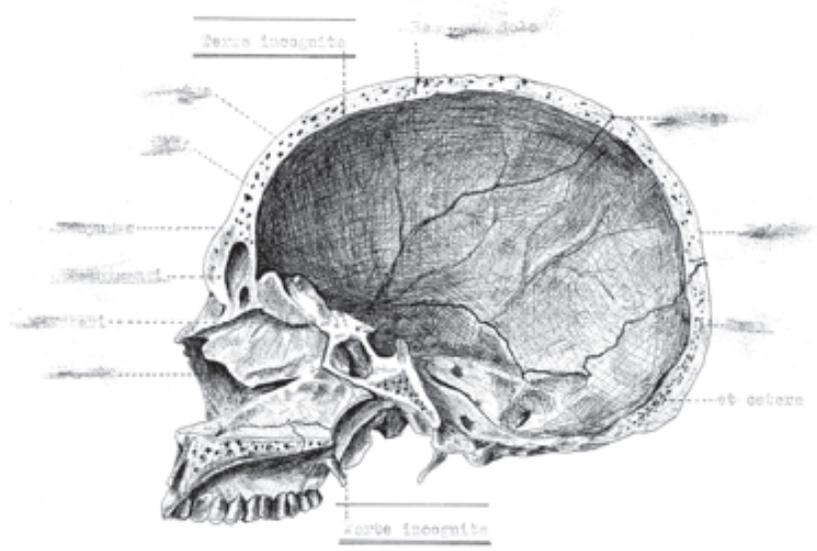
They introduced collared cotton made of cotton wool
spun by those who prayed without speaking,

Then taught a language unspeakable in a prayer

Came like a thief,
Made horses scatter,
cut its head off, promised the heaven and the feast
of gods

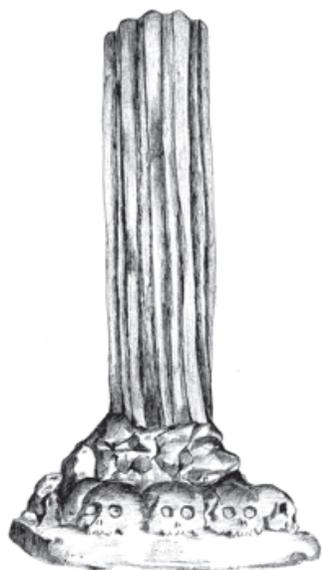
I was there with them.

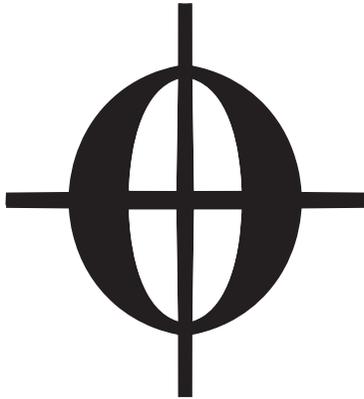
Ludwig Stern, “Per Fidem Intrepidus” (1870)



“After all this time,
I finally came into the feeling of longing for the
busy harbour,
‘Bratwurst’,
Warm ‘Java’
I sipped in my attic;
Snow,
winter, ‘Prelude in C Major’,
Fur coat and love poems,
Frits’ innocence,
and Frau Silke’s smile”

Ludwig Stern, “Per Fidem Intrepidus” (1870)





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DISCLAIMER

MEMOIRS OF TANAH RUNCUK [2014]¹—TROIKA SELEKTA: ECHOES FROM “TERRA INCOGNITA”[2015]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 corruptions in colonial administrative that mingled with local 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 researchers, historians, anthropologists, film-directors, musicians, and scholars. This study centre works interdisciplinary, in order to construct the idea of “Tanah Runcuk”—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 and 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
in collaboration with Maria Puspitasari Munthe (translator, editor)

Cover for this printing edition designed by Jaya Purnama

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. Presented & performed in Kedai Kebun Forum. Curated by Irham Nur Anshari

² TROIKA SELEKTA: ECHOES FROM TERRA INCOGNITA production collaborators are DGTMB Art Embroidery, Juwara Studio, Batik Winotosastro, Krack! Studio, Tedjo Klasyk. Presented & performed in Ark Galerie, 2016. Curated by Alia Swastika