


25 G-w-r-n-d-r.


Maka tiadalah suatu hadiah beta kepada sahabat beta yang patut, jadi permainan mata; hanyalah badik berterapung sebilah, dan tembagga sepasang, semungkal [sic, bungkal]27 emas, pakaiat orang orang Meliau,28 tiada dengan sepertinya, semumpa sekuntum bunga29 adanya. Akan jadi barang gunanya; maka jangan kiranya di’alikan.

Buat surat pada enam likur haribulan Dzulkaedah 1225, Sanah. Tumat.

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KEDAH II

Malay letter, Jawi script, 1 folio, 31.6 x 39.3 cm
Top-centre of folio: Al-mustahaq
Letter of Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin Halim Syah of Kedah, with red seal
Addressed to Raffles at Malacca, with endorsement verso in Raffles’
hand: “April 1811 / Rajah of Quedah”

A letter of unlimited affection and sincerity so long as the heavenly
bodies, the sun and the moon still revolve, that is from Paduka Sri Sultan
Ahmad Tajuddin Halim Syah who owns the throne of government of the
country of Kedah. May God, lord of the worlds, convey it to my friend
Mr. Raffles, who is wise and prudent in showing the path of advantages
and of spiritual needs and ever affectionate to every friend and acquain-
tance and who presently resides in peace in the country of Malacca, the
city of prosperity.

Following that, let it be known to our friend that we have received
news which specifically mentioned that our friend has come from
Bengal, and is holding office as vakeel [agent] to the Governor-General
of Bengal [in order] to deliberate on all matters of government with the
Malay rajas in every negeri. When we heard the news there arose in our
heart feelings of rejoicing and anxiety to make acquaintance with our
friend. And never for an instant did we forget or neglect to place expec-
tations on you. From the very day that we heard of your holding the
office, we have much desired to ask you a favour, but you have sailed
away for Malacca. Thus our hopes were dashed and until today we hear
you are still not back in Pulau Pinang. There is no solace for our heart’s
feelings, for we wish to relate all our anxieties to you to explain about
everything that matters and all our troubles and hardship to be conveyed
to the Governor-General.

With regard to your station, like the Governor-General of Bengal,
there is no difference since you have become agent. This is why we wish
to make known to you everything about Kedah and our problems. We
have also sent a letter to the Governor-General of Bengal informing him
of everything about Kedah and our desires as well as our misery; but we
have yet to receive a reply. This year we are faced with difficulty in
governing Kedah on account of the actions of the Siamese, more
excessive than the ancient customs. We have even abided by the
non-ancient ones for the sake of protecting the country, and in order
to avoid conflicts with them. We have no wish to bring hardship to the
people, and so we obeyed their bidding as required by them. Yet they are still not satisfied, and consequently we are placed in a worsening situation and their intentions are also evil, wanting to confront us; and they have become even bolder. Now they have called us to go to Siam, accompanied by the men who were sent to fetch us. This—their demand—is too much, and so we find it difficult to comply. All these demands have been mentioned to the Governor of Pulau Pinang and we have also mentioned everything in our dispatch to the Governor-General of Bengal.

Herewith is the transcript of our letter to the Governor-General. We are sending a copy to you. We fervently hope that you will help us in conveying our desires—everything that was stated in our dispatch addressed to the Governor-General of Bengal—for you are agent to the Governor-General. Presently we are very much tyrannized by Siam, but we have no more wish to follow the customs which were never practised in ancient times; even if force were to be used we would rather face it. In our opinion, if we do not meet any of their demands we are certain they will be offended because the Siamese are by nature arrogant and they think there is no power mightier than theirs. If we do not obey their command they will surely attack Kedah. Moreover, we have heard and seen their war preparations. When we refused to answer their call [to go to Siam] they threatened to attack [us] because of their suspicion that we have conspired with the Burmese.30

Nevertheless, we are resigned to the fact that, come what may, if we were to comply with their demands more than we have done previously it will bring shame to our name. What is more, it would appear as though we lack faith in the power of the Company for, surely, with it we have forged an alliance. Such is our expectation. The situation between Kedah and Pulau Pinang is one of a single entity and no less. When one is brought pain and trouble then both must share the anguish. Now our hope is that our friend will give a thought to Kedah because it is not different from Pulau Pinang. The Siamese are numerically greater than the people of Kedah. Our hope is that the Company will come to our assistance through our friend's counsel. Thus this is what we wish to make known.

30 This was in reference to the Burmese invasion of Ujung Salang [Thalang] in 1809–1810.


Kedah 2

Warkah Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin kepada Raffles, 1 lemar, 31.6 x 39.3 cm

Surat kasih sayang tulus ikhlas yang tiada berkesudahan selagi ada perkaitan cakrawala matahari dan bulan daripada Paduka Seri Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin Halim Syah yang mempunyai takhta kerajaan negeri Kedah; barang disampaikan Tuhan sarwa sekalian alam kiranya kepada sahabat beta Mister Raffles yang amat arif bijaksana dan pandai pada menunjuki [sic] jalan yang kebajikan dan faham, tetap kasih sayangnya pada segala handai dan taulan, yang ada pada masa ini istirahat al-kahir dalam negeri Melaka, bandar yang makmur.


Ehwal inilah beta nyatakan perbuat surat pada enam likur haribulan Rabi’ul-awal 1226 sanah tahun Dal Awal ‘am.31 Tamat.

KEDAIIII

Malay letter, Jawi script, 1 folio, 33 x 26 cm
Letter of Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin Halim Syah of Kedah with red seal, inscribed with Arabic script at right-hand corner of paper addressed to Raffles at Malacca
Heading: ‘Qawluh u’l-Haqq’
Endorsement recto, top left-hand corner of paper in Raffles’ hand: ‘From the Raja of Kedah / to / Thos. Raffles Esqr. With the / same terms as the letter to Ld. Minto / of the same date’

Letter of sincere affection and love without end for as long as the universe, sun and moon are in revolution, from His Highness Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin Halim Syah who owns the government of the country of Kedah; may it be conveyed by the Lord God of the universe to my friend Mister Raffles, who is agent to the Governor-General of Bengal, and ruling over every Malay raja, yet wise and prudent, intelligent and judicious in every perception and action, and famous for [his] distinction in this age, who presently resposes in the settlement of Malacca.

The circumstance is that, in this month of Rabi’ul-akhir, the Governor-General of Bengal has arrived at Pulau Pinang. When we heard the news, on that very day we left Kedah to meet the Governor-General but when we reached Pulau Pinang the Governor-General had already sailed away from Penang a day earlier, and so we missed seeing him. We were so disheartened because we wished so much to meet the Governor-General face-to-face, to relate to him our wishes and desires, as is proper; unfortunately, now it has not been fulfilled by God. Because of this we wrote a letter to the Governor-General mentioning our arrival in Pulau Pinang and we are hoping for your kindness and assistance in conveying our wishes as stated in the contents of the letter we sent to the Governor-General heretofore, which [copy] we are now dispatching to you.32 Our hopes are so high and we wish to thank you, our friend.

31 ‘Am is Arabic for Anno.
32 The Sultan sent to Raffles the copy of the letter he wrote to Lord Minto. See Kedah IV below.
Kedah 3

Warkah Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin Halim Syah kepada Raffles, satu lembar, 33 x 26 sm dengan meterai lilin merah

Surat kasih sayang tulus ikhlas berkasih-kasihan yang tiada berkesudahan selagi ada perkitaran cakrawala matalah dan bulan daripada Paduka Seri Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin Halim Syah yang mempunyai kerajaan negeri Kedah; barang disampaikan Tuhan sarwa alam kepada sahabat beta Mister Raffles yang jadi wakil Gurnador Jeneral [sic] Benggala memerintahkan atas segala raja-rajanya Melayu, lagi arif bijaksana pandai pada segala fikiran dan pekerjaan termasyhur kepujian pada zaman ini; yang ada pada masa ini istirahat di dalam negeri Melaka.


Ehwal inilah beta nyatakan perbuat surat pada hari Ithnin, enam luruh bulan Rabi’ul-akhir, 1226 Sanah.

KEDAH IV

Malay letter, Jawi script, 1 folio, 32.5 x 41.5 cm

Addressed to Lord Minto at Bengal, with endorsement verso in Raffles’ hand: ‘1811- / dated / [blank] / received—King of Ouedah / to the Right / Hon’ble the Gov. / General at / Malacca 29 May’

Heading: ‘Qawlah u ‘l-Haqq’

An epistle of sincerity, with varied gifts, written with reverential veneration, candour and affection, so long as the heavenly sphere, the sun and the moon, shall continue to revolve, from us, Paduka Sri Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin Halim Syah, son of the deceased Paduka Sri Sultan Abdullah Al-Mukarram Syah, who owns the kingdom of the country of Kedah. May by the Lord God of all the worlds cause it to be conveyed to our friend the Governor-General, who runs the government in the country of Bengal and holds jurisdiction in all lands above34 and below the wind35 that are under the control of the Company; who is wise and prudent, and his name is celebrated with voices of adoration; he is renowned for his benevolence and also compassion towards friends and associates; he now lives in repose and rectitude in the settlement of Malacca.

Following that, be it known that when we heard news of your arrival at Pulau Pinang36 we were very delighted for we wanted to meet face-to-face with you and to express our desires as we have mentioned in our previous letter. We left Kedah on Monday, the nineteenth of Rabi’ul-akhir, but upon arrival at Pulau Pinang we discovered that you

33 Arabic inscription on seal: “The possessor of authority / the powerful / the victorious / the undefeated / the Government / God brings forth / the district of Kedah / and he who becomes Sultan / Ahmad Tajuddin ibni Al-Sultan Abdullah Mukaram Syah / 1219”
34 Above the wind = leeward.
35 Below the wind = windward.
36 Lord Minto arrived at Penang from Calcutta with part of the force destined to invade Java on 8 May 1811.
had left a day earlier.\(^\text{37}\) We were so disappointed at not being able to achieve our aim. Due to our bad fortune we were not fated by God to meet [you] this time. And this is what we wish to make known to you.

The administration in Kedah is presently very much troubled by Siam. They have commanded us to do things that are contrary to the customs of ancient times and consequently we and the whole country suffer.\(^\text{38}\) We therefore place our high hopes on your assistance to give protection to the country of Kedah, as we have stated in our previous dispatch to you, in order that we shall be relieved of this severe oppression by Siarn. We appeal to you to look after the country of Kedah just like Pulau Pinang because both are of one spread.

We hereby state that this letter is written on Monday, the twenty-sixth of Rabi’ul-akhir 1226 Hegira [20 May 1811 CE].

*Kedah 4*

*Warkah Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin Halim Syah kepada Gabenor Jenderal di Benggala bertarikh 26 Rabi’ul-akhir 1226, satu lembur, 32.5 x 41.5 sm berikir*\(^\text{39}\)

Warkat al-ikhlas wa tuhfat al-ajnas yang termaktub di dalamnya takrim yang salim serta tulus ikhlas yang tiada berkesudahan selagi ada perkara cakrawala matatari dan bulan daripada beta Paduka Seri Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin Halim Syah ibn al-Marhum Paduka Seri Sultan Abdullah al-Mukaram Syah yang empunya kerajaan negeri Kedah; barang disampaikan Tuhan sarab sekalai alam kehadapan sahabat beta Gurnador Jenderal yang mentadbirkan kerajaan negeri Benggala dan memerintah atas segala negeri di atas angin dan di bawah angin yang di dalam pegangan Kompeni; lagi amat arif bijaksana, masyhar bahananya, kepujian dan kebiliangan pada nama yang kebaikan lagi sangat mengasehini handai sahabat; yang ada sekarang istirahat al-khair di dalam negeri Melaka.


Ehwal inilah beta takrifkan perbuat surat pada Ithnin, enam likir haribulan Rabi’ul-akhir 1226 sanah. Tamat.
II. THE PENANG LETTERS

PENANG I

Malay letter, Jawi script; 1 folio, 20.2 x 31.1 cm, with red-wax seal; addressed to Mr. Erskine.
Endorsement verso Malay letter in Raffles’ hand: ‘Sudagar 9 (?) April’
Endorsement verso: ‘Malay letter’
Heading: ‘Nur u’t-Syams wal-Qamar.’

A letter of sincerity along with brotherly love and affection from me Seri Maharaja Saudagar; may it be delivered, I pray, to my friend Mr. Erskine who is wise and prudent towards helping friends and companions and those marred by misfortune; celebrated and renowned everywhere.

And so following that, regarding the sail-cloth that my friend delivered through your men who arrived by the Company’s boat, it has already reached me. I thank you for that. And so they have taken the 20 logs of gong timber; previously it was four logs, thus making it 24 logs. As for the types of logs, they are both large and small; 150 logs are still with me. I shall need a favour from you, though. Please have a boat sent to fetch the logs. If my friend feels that you are not pleased with them, please sell them to someone who wants them. [They are] only for work on small boats. I beg you to help me, for otherwise I shall suffer losses as I have not the means to send them for sale in Pulau Pinang.

Please indicate the type of timber you desire for work on large boats for the Company to my man who carried the timber for the crossbeams, and decide on its size as well as the names of the timber and within how many days you want them. Please decide on the cost. Then I can ask my companions to look for them and bring them back to be kept at my place. My friend can then send a boat to fetch them. There are two raft-loads of cross-trees timber for the oars; there are thirty and a half logs. You may have them at whatever price is considered proper. The money that you gave, i.e. 20 rial, for buying the fowls, I have, where possible, used for the purchase. I have already instructed your man. My friend may order your man to take them.

Further, I have sent my companions to go and look for more. It is all done; I shall have them sent to you, along with the inventory of purchase for the chickens. Under the circumstances I make known that this letter is written on the eleventh of Muharram, 1221 Hegira [31 March 1806 CE]. Finis.

1 Light of the sun and the moon.
2 The title of Maharaja Saudagar, with the holder being in possession of his own seal, seems to refer to the Indian Saudagar Raja or the King’s merchant, discussed by Barbara Andaya. He was the single person authorized to conduct trade on behalf of the Malay raja. According to Dr. Andaya, the institution was already known in Kedah in the 17th century, or earlier. He was personally responsible for delivering the Sultan’s goods to the purchaser and for the collection of payment. It would appear that the title of Maharaja Saudagar must have been used to replace the title of Saudagar Raja. Like its predecessor, the office was likely to have been dominated by Indian Muslims, whether Tamil or Malabar. For further information on the Saudagar Raja, see B. W. Andaya, ‘The Indian Saudagar Raja (the King’s Merchant) in Traditional Malay Courts’, JMBRAS, 51(1), 1978.
3 John James Erskine was appointed as Assistant to the Superintendent of Marine and Store Keeper at Penang in 1805. Based on the above letter, Erskine must have been dealing with the purchase of timber with Seri Maharaja Saudagar. As the Assistant to the Superintendent of Marine and Store Keeper he was allowed to take a commission of two per cent on the goods he handled. See John Bastin, John Leyden and Thomas Stamford Raffles, Anthony Rowe Ltd, Eastbourne, 2003, p. 114, note 161.
4 The scientific name is Helicia petiolaris or Xerospermum laevigatum. The present Malay name for the former is putat tepi; the latter is currently known as rambutan pacat.
5 In 1806, shipbuilding was undertaken in Penang; the authorities realized the problems faced in acquiring both skilled shipbuilders and sufficient timber of durable quality. Nonetheless, three ships were planned for construction. According to Stubbs Brown, a large ship was designed at Penang in 1806 to be built using local timber. This letter that was addressed to J. J. Erskine must have been the response to the query made regarding the effort to procure the local timber. See Appendix A (M. Stubbs Brown, The Failure of Penang as a Naval Base and Shipbuilding Centre) in John Bastin’s ‘Historical Sketch of Penang in 1794’, JMBRAS, 32(1), 1959, pp. 30–32.
6 The conversion made by the Gregorian-Hiljri converter is 1 April 1806. However, the next letter was dated 1222 Hijrih. It seems that the scribe had made an error in the Hegirm year, most probably in this letter, for J. J. Erskine only became Superintendent of Marine in 1807. The conversion from the Amma Hegire to the Gregorian calendar for the date in the next letter would be 21 March 1807.
Pulau Pinang I

Warkah Seri Maharaja Saudagar, tulisan Jawi, satu lembar; 20.2 x 31.1 sm

Surat tulus ikhlas serta kasih sayang daripada beta Seri Maharaja Saudagar; barang disampaikan Tuhan swara sekalian alam apalaha kiranya kepada sahabat Mister [m-s-t-r] Askin [Erskine] yang arif bijaksana pada hal menolong andai [sic] taulan, hina; gah smashur [sic] ke mana-mana.

Ama ba’adah kemudian daripada itu ehwal kain sel sahabat beta beri mari pada orang sahabat beta yang mari dalam boi Komponi [kompeni] itu sudahlah sampai pada beta. Beta terima kasih daripada sahabat beta; maka ia terima ambil kayu gong dua puluh batang; dahulu empat batang, jadi dua puluh empat batang.


PENANG II

Malay letter, Jawi script, 1 folio, 19.5 x 20.5 cm with red wax seal, 2.5 dm; inscribed in Jawi: ‘Seri Maharaja / Merchant / in Kedah’

Addressed to Mr. Erskine

Endorsement verso: ‘Malay letter’

Heading: ‘Nur u’l- S[y]amsu wa’l-Qamar’

A letter of sincerity along with love and affection from me Seri Maharaja Saudagar reaching my friend Mr. Erskine who is wise and prudent in the matter of helping friends and companions and people of humble disposition and who is renowned everywhere.

Following that, regarding my friend’s request for people who could show the different kinds of timber, I have already dispatched Tengku Kulang together with ten logs to be delivered to you for you to see the types of timber you would like to have. My friend may indicate the kind of timber you want and quote the price. As I am your man, whatever you assign me here on this land across the water10 I shall execute it. As for my 150 logs of gong11 timber, I beg you not to incur me losses. Concerning the timber that you require, please decide on the price. I shall then ask for them to be searched for and have them piled; you can then ask for them to be fetched.

I am now in the forest; there is nothing that I can find. Still, I am sending you a fowl, and some watermelons, tapioca and some sirih leaves. What I am giving you is not as it should be, as I am but a poor man. Please accept them and please do not put me to shame. Under the circumstances I wish to make known that this letter is written on the seventeenth of Maharram 1222 AH [21 March 1807 CE]. Finis.

7 Generally, rakit refers to raft. But rakit could also mean floor planking or cross-beams.
8 Crossbreed of paddle-rudder and of certain types of oars.
9 i.e., twenty-five.

10 Seberang Perai (Province Wellesley).
11 Name of a tree, Helicia petiolaris or Xerospermum laevigatum.
Pulau Pinang 2

Wurkah Seri Maharaja Saudagar, satu lembar, 19.5 x 20.5 cm

Surat tulus ikhlas serta kasih sayang daripada beta Seri Maharaja Saudagar sampai kepada sahabat beta Mister Akin [sic, Erskine] yang arif bijaksana pada hal menolong andai taulan hina dina, gah masyhur ke mana-mana.


PENANG III

Though Penang was formally occupied by the British on 11 August 1786, the problem of maintaining order was not resolved until 1807 when a charter was promulgated. Before that date, the partial administration of justice was delegated to the various headmen of the different communities—kapitan for the Chinese, Malays and Chulias. Nominated by the Superintendent of the island of Penang, these kapitan adjudicated in petty civil cases of their own particular communities. Matters concerning domestic disputes and the recovery of debts were under their jurisdiction if such cases did not exceed 10 dollars; if the debt exceeded that amount they could only adjudicate in the capacity of arbitrators.

In 1805, following the elevation of the status of Penang to a Presidency, with the Governor and Council appointed, the jurisdiction of civil and criminal matters was transferred to the Police Magistrate under the orders of the Governor and Council. The following letter involving the civil case of several Chinese, which was probably written in 1806 or 1807, shows the plaintiff making his complaint to the Governor and requesting the latter to intercede on his behalf.

Malay letter, Jawi script, 1 folio, 21.3 x 31.5 cm

Letter of the Chinese Lim To, addressed to the Governor of Penang

Your Lordship’s servant, Chinaman Lim To, writes with obeisance to the Tuan Raja regarding my son, Chinaman Ki Hok [k-h-k] who died in the previous year on the twenty-fifth of the twelfth month [December?]. During that time Chinaman Lim Chan Chun stayed together with him while working as a coolie for my son, Chinaman Ki Hok. At the time of my son’s death I was not in the settlement of Pulau Pinang. I was away travelling by sea. Then Cik Busu wrote me a letter making it possible for me to know of my son’s death. And so I made haste to return to Pulau Pinang. I went to make inquiries with Chinaman Chan Chun as to how much property my son had left, and also the amount of the expenses incurred upon his death, and how much money people owed him, and where the collection [of money] and all [marks of] the palms of hands of people who owed my [son] money were, as well as how much my son was in debt to others. I went to enquire from Chinaman Lim Chan Chun, but he refused to inform me; subsequently he went to conspire with Chinaman Lim Tang.

Now, the Chinaman Lim Chan Chun is not a sibling of Chinaman Ki Hok. He told lies when he claimed that he is the sibling of Chinaman Ki Hok. He then acquired power of attorney as if a will was made by Chinaman Ki Hok, although Chinaman Ki Hok never ever gave him such a document. The Chinaman Lim Chan Chun concocted his own document of power of attorney.

And further, he had kept secret all those people who owed money to Chinaman Ki Hok. And he kept hidden the gold and silver accessories belonging to Chinaman Ki Hok. Subsequently, I enquired from

13 I.e., their signatures.
Chinaman Ong; he told me that there is a chest containing Chinaman Ki Hok’s belongings. In that chest are all the articles of gold and silver. As for the chest, Chinaman Lim Chan Chun and Lim Tang have already taken and hidden it. It is these two people who have made away with other people’s property. These two people are the people [sic]. Then Chinaman [Lim] To further [informed] Chinaman Ong about each and every one of the belongings. As stated by Chinaman Ong, all that is correct. There is no mistake whatsoever. And further, there were strangers there when Chinaman Lim Chan Chun carried away all the property from the house of Chinaman Ki Hok. Somebody saw it, and he wants to be witness to it. Regarding this, I thought he wanted to make a complaint to the Head of the Court. But the Ahya\textsuperscript{14} Chinaman refused to allow me to enter to see the Head of the Court because the Ahya Chinaman has already been bribed by Chinaman Lim Chan Chun, on one account, by making payment of opium costing 10 \textit{rial} [dollars], and hard cash of 20 dollars. There is a witness, the Chinaman Ang Tab, to these two instances of bribery, amounting to 30 dollars.

On another matter, by the 16th day I heard news that Chinaman Chan Chun has offered a pledge of hard cash amounting to 350 \textit{rial} [dollars] to the Chinese chief of the liquor-farm since he wants to acquire it in order to sell it to someone else. That money is also Chinaman Ki Hok’s. And now because of the two men, the farm will also be sold for less than the purchase price. If he ever comes there will be witnesses. As for his farm, [acquired] from the head of the liquor-farm, that too he has closed as he couldn’t bear the losses.

The cash value that he offered as security to the chief of the liquor-farm was 350 \textit{rial} [dollars] after having deducted the losses. Other than that, he had received 115 \textit{rial}. And so the liquor-farm’s case was settled.

To my mind this is very disquietening. The wrongdoings of Chinaman Chan Chun have emerged. Your lordship’s servant can vouch for that. Furthermore, the evil intention of Chinaman Chan Chun is the desire to cause the loss of all my son’s property.

And so your lordship’s servant comes to seek help from you Tuan Raja [Governor], to summon Chinaman Chan Chun in order to investi-}


\textsuperscript{15} Power of attorney.


Maka di dalam rial dia cagar pada Tuan Pajak Arak itu tiga ratus lima puluh itu, dia tolak rugi; lain daripada itu dia terima ambil seratus lima belas rial. Maka sudahlah selesai daripada pajak arak itu; maka pada hati hamba Tuan ini banyak susah; salah Cina Chan Chun itu timbul boleh hamba Tuan beri saksinya. Lagi pada perintah jahat Cina Chan Chun itu hendak diperhilangkan segala harta anak hamba Tuan ini.

Maka inilah hamba Tuan mari pintak [sic] tolong kepada Tuan Raja; pintak [sic] panggil Cina Chan Chun itu periksa siapa salah dan siapa benar, hamba Tuan, apa kedua orang ini; boleh tuan tahu benar salahnya itu. Ehwal inilah hamba Tuan mari maklunkan kepada Tuan Raja, di perbuat surat int.

[Undated]

16 Taken a bribe.
17 Hard cash.

PENANG IV

Malay letter, 1 folio, Jawi script, 33.4 x 20.2 cm, with red wax seal, addressed to the Yang Di Pertuan of Kedah

Endorsement verso: signature of Philip Dundas, Resident-Governor [sic] of Penang

Heading: ‘Qawwuh u’l-Haqq’

Your Highness, Sultan most respected in existence; peace and with sincerity and candour, of brotherly love and affection from us the Honourable Philip Dundas, the President [sic] Governor of Penang Island. After [that] it is laid before our friend the Yang Di Pertuan of Kedah, the abode of peace, His Highness who is wise and prudent, and whose praiseworthiness spreads near and far.

And following that, concerning our agent, Mr. Syen [sic, Erskine?], he has already left for Kedah to look for the large timbers which are needed for the building of ships-of-war, since he knows what kind of timbers, whether large or small sizes, we require. Owing to this we are sending a letter to our friend so that our friend could provide your trusted man to accompany our agent, Mr. Syen [sic], to go in search of places where the larger timbers are available. And further, whatever Mr. Syen [sic] wants, our friend may state the price. This will enable Mr Syen [sic] to take various types of timber and he can smoothly conduct the deliberations on our behalf with our friend. And whatever is wanted by Mr Syen [sic] our friend may give it to him. Subsequently we shall send [payment] for the cost of what has been taken by Mr. Syen [sic] from our friend.

18 When Penang was made a Presidency in 1805 in the hope that it would serve as the leading trading centre of the island group, Philip Dundas was appointed Governor of Pulau Pinang with a council. When he first arrived in Penang Dundas had a scheme to build a dockyard, but he realized that Penang did not have the necessary hard timber. To import timber from Burma would be a costly affair and so the project was abandoned. However, when shipbuilding was undertaken by the Company, Dundas sent his officials to look for timber across the Prai and Kedah. Despite his efforts to develop Penang, Dundas nevertheless met sudden death on 8 April 1807, after barely eighteen months’ service as governor. H. P. Clodd, *Malaya’s First British Pioneer: the Life of Francis Light*, Luzac & Co. Ltd., London, 1948, pp. 144–146.
Pulau Pinang 4

Workah Philip Dundas, Presiden-Gabenor [sic] Pulau Pinang, satu lembar, 33.4 x 20.2 cm

Tuanku Sultan Yang terhormat al-majud; salam serta dengan tulus adan [sic] ikhlas, kasih-kerasikan daripada beta Mihrana


Perbuat surat ini pada lima hari bulan Muharram hari Ahad [without the year]. Tamat.

PENANG V

Malay letter, Jawi script, 1 folio, 20.5 x 32.2 cm, without seal

Letter of Philip Dundas [copy?] President [sic]-Governor of Penang to Tunku Bismu

A letter of sincerity and mutual affection that is without end so long as the revolution of the sun and the moon continues, that is from us the Honourable Philip Dundas, President [sic]-Governor, raja of Pulau Pinang; may it be conveyed by God, Lord of All the Worlds, to our friend Tunku Bismu, who is wise and prudent; his praiseworthy name is renowned everywhere owing to his mutual assistance among friends and companions near and far.

Following that, we thus make it known that two months ago, Captain Scott, our vakeel, made an agreement with our friend [in which]

20 The year is not given; however, it is possible that this letter was written in March 1807 just about a month before Dundas died. The date 5 Muharram 1222, if correct, was a Sunday (15 March 1807).
22 Correctly b-h-r-m-a [Behrama]; but the phonemes [m], [p] and [b] are quite often interchangeably used in the Malay language. Thus it is possible that the writer had erroneously missed the dot for the Jawi letter ‘ba’ [b] and instead caused it to be replaced by the letter ‘mim’ [m], thus rendering the word to be spelt ‘Mihrana’.
23 The younger brother of Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin of Kedah. Although this letter is undated it must have been written before Dundas’s death in 1807. Tunku Bismu was, during this period, probably no longer the Raja Muda of Kedah as the letter from Dundas did not address him as the Raja Muda. According to one source, Tengku Bismu relinquished the post of Raja Muda to Tunku Ibrahim, who succeeded him in around 1807-1808. See Kobkua Suwannahat-Pian, ‘Kedah—Siam Relations’, JMBRAS, 72(2), 1999, pp. 67, 68, and 81, 83. Cf. Muhammad Hassan bin Dato’ Kerani Muhammad Arshad, Al-Farikh Salasih Negri, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kuala Lumpur, 1968, p. 129.
an undertaking was given to you for the purchase of 1,000 logs for the purpose of building a large boat, a man-of-war. As for the price of the timber, Captain Scott has already promised to pay our friend in accordance with the customary price. However, presently the captain is on another assignment in the settlement of Pulau Pinang. Because of that we wish to establish friendly terms between us. We have received news that our friend is most happy and shows whiteness of heart towards us, and is keen on mutual friendship. Likewise, we also have whiteness of heart towards our friend. For this we are sending this letter to our friend. Our intention is to strike an accord with our friend similar to what Captain Scott had undertaken with our friend previously.

Further, to our mind it is better that we and our friend jointly carry out any undertaking and negotiate any agreement directly, based on all the regulations. Let there be no intermediary; to our mind such things are not good. And further, in Captain Scott’s letter of undertaking with our friend previously, it was mentioned that there are timbers other than the 1,000 logs. Now, we would like to have those other timbers as well. So we are ordering our man of trust, Hakim Ibrahim, ²⁴ to go and present himself before you, and convey this letter of ours and to discuss whatever is good with regard to the issue, that is to deliver all the various types of timber, in accordance with the Company’s ruling, to him.

And further, should there be any discussion from our friend, our man the Hakim may provide the interpretation. We trust our friend will help giving instructions to look after our man accordingly. And further, after having felled all the timbers please take them to the edge of the water. Could our friend please write us a letter. And we shall send a boat to fetch the timber. As for the price of the logs, our friend may negotiate with the captain of the vessel. He will pay according to the customary cost. And further, should the timber be available in the not too distant future, please give a reply to this letter of ours.

[Unsigned and undated]

²⁴ Son of Sultan Abdullah (1778–1798). The title ‘Hakim’ was used for notaries, whose duties were to keep registers of marriages, deaths, slaves and sales of land and houses. T. Braddell, ‘Notices of Penang (extracts of Captain Light’s dispatches dated 1792)’, JAENA, 4, 1850, p. 656.
PENANG VI

Malay letter, 1 folio, 20.5 x 17 cm
Letter of Tunku Long with small seal on the right-hand side
Addressed to Raffles at Penang
Letter’s heading: ‘Qauluh u’l-Haqq’

A letter of sincerity and mutual affection that is endless, so long as the heavenly sphere, the sun and the moon still revolve, from us, Tunku Long. May it be delivered by God, lord of the universe, to our friend Secretary Mr. Raffles, whose intelligence and wisdom are well known and his praiseworthy things celebrated everywhere.

In the circumstances, Tunku Sulaiman, is already prepared to go and reside in Kuala Perai as we already mentioned earlier. We have therefore come along in order to send off the Tunku. With regard to the Tunku, all of us do not really understand the customs and regulations of the Company pertaining to denials and repudiations and the bringing of the Tunku to meet face-to-face with the Raja [Governor] of Pulau Pinang. And therefore this Saturday we shall all stop in the estuary of the Merbok. We shall let Nakhoda [Ship-master] Bapu convey the letter to

25 Tunku Long refers to Tunku Long Puteh, the brother-in-law of Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin. Towards the end of April 1810 he was sent by Sultan Ahmad to see Charles Andrew Bruce, who had been appointed Governor of Penang in March 1810. See Bonney, Kedah 1771–1821, p. 118.
26 He was the brother of Tunku Ahmad Tajuddin from a different mother (Che Bond). According to Bonney, Suleiman moved to Kota, on the Sungai Perai, near the border with Province Wellesley. Ibid., p. 114.
27 The name suggests he was a Tamil.

the Raja of Pulau Pinang. As soon as it arrives please give a reply to it. We shall all depart then. And so this is our request to Pulau Pinang. Could our friend please take Nakhoda Bapu to see the Raja and wait for the letter of reply along with his decision so that it will be easier for us to deal with this matter. This is our statement.

Letter is written on the 20th of Rabi’ul-awal, on Saturday; finis. [Without year; 1224? = 1809?] 28

Pulau Pinang 6

Warkah Tunku Long kepada Raffles, satu lembar, 20.5 x 17 sm

Surat tulus ikhlas kasih berkasihan yang tiada berputusan, selagi ada perkaraan iaitu cakrawala matahari dan bulan, daripada beta Tunku [t-n-k-w] Long. Barang disampaikan Tuhan sarwa sekalani alam kepada sahabat beta Sekridari [sic, Secretary] Mister Raffles yang akal bijaksana gah masyhur wartanya yang kepunian sampai ke mana-mana.


Perbuat surat pada 20 haribulan Rabi’ul-awal, hari Sabtu; tamat.

28 This letter from Tunku Long appears to be a follow-up to Tunku Sulaiman’s first communication with the Governor of Penang, dated 23 November 1808 in which he expressed his intention to move to Kuala Perai. See Bonney, Kedah 1771–1821, p. 114.
PENANG VII

Malay letter, with enclosure, Jawi script, 1 folio/ folded, 41 x 33 cm
Letter of Sayid Husain Abdul Rahman Aidid, with red-wax seal, addressed to Raffles
Endorsement verso Malay letter in Romanised script: ‘November 1810 - / Syde Hussain’
Endorsement in Jawi script: ‘This letter is from Tengku Sayid Husain / on the twenty-sixth of the month of Syawal’
Heading: ‘Al-Mustahaqq’

A letter of sincerity and affection from me, Tengku Sayid Sharif Husain bin Abdul Rahman Aidid who resides in Pulau Pinang, to reach my

29 To Him [God] all rights are due.
30 Tengku Syarif Sayid Husain bin Abdul Rahman Aidid, a wealthy Arab merchant, was the grandson of an Arab trader who had settled in Aceh at the beginning of the 18th century and then married one of the daughters of Sultanah Kamalat Syah, the last of the four queens of Aceh, who ruled from 1641 to circa 1700. Sayid Husain was born in Aceh, but had left the country and gone to reside in Kuala Selangor. He settled in Penang around 1790 and soon rose to become one of the richest merchants in the colony. It was reported that in the 1790s his ships were travelling as far as Susu on the Acehnese west coast to purchase pepper. Because of his reputation as a wealthy trader he became an influential personality in commercial circles in Penang. He was well known to the native chiefs with whom he dealt in commerce; among them were Sultan Mahmud of Lingga and Sultan Jauhar Alam Syah of Aceh. But the special privilege awarded to him in not having to pay the usual customs duties in Aceh was withdrawn by Jauhar Alam in 1809 due to the Sultan’s suspicion of his involvement in the dispute regarding the succession to the Acehnese throne. In mid-1815 the three panglima saja in Aceh claimed that they had elected Sayid Husain as Sultan of Aceh in place of Jauhar Alam, but he instead proposed that his son be made sultan. Despite the Penang government’s refusal to allow him to send armed ships for purposes of war in Aceh, Sayid Husain, under the pretext of sailing to Aceh with his second son to perform certain rites at the tombs of his ancestors, and needed protection against pirates, managed to sail with an armoury consisting of 33 cannons, some muskets, pistols, ammunition, and swords and other such weapons. When he reached Pedir, his son was duly proclaimed as the new Sultan of Aceh with the name Sultan Saif al-Alam Syah. Although Jauhar Alam Syah sailed for Penang to seek British help he was forced to return to Aceh in April 1816 without much success. See C. A. Gibson-Hill, ‘Raffles, Aceh, and the Order of the Golden Sword’, JMBRAS, 29(1), 1956, pp. 11–12. See also Lee Kam Hing, The Sultanate of Aceh: Relations with the British 1760–1824, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1995, p. 79.

friend His Excellency Thomas Raffles, vakeel of the Company and the Tuan General [sic] Lord Minto, Raja of Bengal, the honourable, who is intelligent and prudent, and whose name is renowned everywhere for mutual assistance among friends and companions.

The circumstance is, now that my friend has become agent to the Raja of Bengal to look into the affairs of all the Malay countries, I would therefore like to represent my case, to solicit help from my friend in connection with my business with Tuan Sultan Mahmud. It is with regard to my ketch having previously been confiscated by Tuan Sultan Mahmud, [The loss of] my ketch with all its laden goods was reported in the past. The Admiral and the Tuan Raja [Governor] of Pulau Pinang then sent a war-boat to Riau to procure the ketch together with a few assets.

[But] according to the accounts in the inventory there is still a remaining sum of 25,672.75 rial and 5 kupon and 9 duit. This is the remainder that is left with Tuan Sultan Mahmud until today.

The assets of Tengku Sayid Husain’s ketch amount to 20,651 rial and 16 duit (20651.16). Such has been the settlement reached by the Admiral and the Tuan Raja of Pulau Pinang. And the Tuan Raja of Pulau Pinang’s letter has also been dispatched to Sultan Mahmud together with the account asking for the remaining rial. Tuan Sultan Mahmud replied that at this time he doesn’t have the money because he has spent it on expenditure for the fortress and other things. “If the Tuan Raja of Pulau Pinang still wants the sum we can pay it later,” says Tuan Sultan Mahmud. That is why I am seeking help from my friend. Through my friend’s assistance it may be possible to procure my possessions from Tuan Sultan Mahmud. That is why I leave it to His Excellency Thomas Raffles because my friend presides over the deliberations of all the Malay countries in the east and the west.

It is hereby stated that this letter is written on the twenty-sixth of Syawal, in the year of Zai, 1225 Hegira [24 November 1810 CE]. Fints.

31 Sultan Mahmud Syah at Lingga.
32 Spanish dollars.
33 Ten cents.
34 A quarter cent (Spanish).
Enclosure in Sayid Husain's letter. 1 folio, 20 x 32.9 cm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Rial</th>
<th>Duit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This is the inventory of payment received [from] Tuan Sultan Mahmud, His Excellency of Riau-Lingga</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The total cargo in the ketch of Tuanku Sayid Husain bin Abdul Rahman Aidid, resident of Pulau Pinang, taken by Tuan Sultan Mahmud is to the amount of thirty-three thousand and seven hundred and twenty-three and three-quarter rial being the price of the merchandise</td>
<td>33723</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further, the ketch compounded by the Tuan Raja of Pulau Pinang is valued at five thousand five hundred rial</td>
<td>5500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And further, received in possession by the Tuan Sultan four iron cannon, the weight of the cannon balls being six pounds each costing four hundred rial</td>
<td>400</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And four iron cannons the weight of the cannon balls being four pounds costing two hundred and sixty rial</td>
<td>260</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four cock blunderbuss (musketoons) costing one hundred rial</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two pairs of pairing musketoons costing sixty rial</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three guns costing twenty-four rial</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three kegs of gunpowder costing one hundred and fifty rial</td>
<td>105</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of deliveries taken by Tuan Sultan</td>
<td>40172</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the meanwhile, what has arrived from Tuan Sultan Mahmud, sent through the warship is a sum of one thousand rial ..................... 1000

The delivery made through a ketchload of one thousand piculs of pepper worth eight thousand rial ........................................ 8000

The delivery for the price of the ketch as based on the previous price is five thousand five hundred rial ....................... 5500

Total sum of deliveries of the three items being fourteen thousand five hundred rial ........................................ 14500

And further, minus the portion for Tuan Sultan Mahmud in accordance with the English custom which is divided by eight, one portion being five thousand twenty-one rial and five kupang and nine duit ...................... 5021.59

The total number of deliveries [shipments?] that includes the share of Tuan Sultan being nineteen thousand five hundred and twenty-one rial and five kupang, nine duit. .......................... 19521.59

The remaining property, i.e. the ketch of Tuanku Sayid Husain, left with Tuan Sultan Mahmud is twenty thousand, six hundred and fifty-one rial sixteen duit .......................... 20651.16
Pulau Pinang 7

Warkah Sayid Husain bin Abdul Rahman Aidid, satu lembar, 41 x 33 sm

Surat tulis ikhlas serta berkash-kasih daripada Tengku Al-Sayid Al-Syarif Husain bin Abdul Rahman Aidid yang deduk di Pulau Pinang sampai kepada sahabat beta Tuan Paduka Seri Thomas Raffles, wakil Kompeni Tuan Jenderal Lord Minto, Raja Benggala yang mulia; yang akal bijaksana lagi masyhur nama kemana-mana daripada tolong menolong daripada handai sahabatnya.

Ehwal maka ini sahabat beta sudah menjadi Wakil ganti Raja Benggala memeriksa di atas segala negeri Melayu; sebab itulah beta mengadukan hal pinta tolong kepada sahabat beta akan hal pekerjaan beta dengan Tuan Sultan Mahmud. Daripada pekerjaan keci beta diambil oleh Tuan Sultan Mahmud dahulu; keci dengan segala harta itu telah bincara dahulu. Tuan hadmiral [Admiral] dan Tuan Raja Pulau Pinang antar [sic] pergi kapal perang ke Riau mengambil keci dengan harta sedikit.


Lampiran kepada warkah Sayid Husain, 1 folio 20 x 32.9 sm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inilah daftar Ambilan bayaran/Tuan Sultan Mahmud, Yang Mulia Riau Lingga.</th>
<th>Rial</th>
<th>Duit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jumlah muatan yang di dalam keci Tengku Sayid Husin bin Abdul Rahman Aidid yang deduk di Pulau Pinang itu yang diambil oleh Tuan Sultan Mahmud. Maka banyaknya tiga puluh tiga ribu tujuh ratus dua puluh tiga rial tiga suku harga dagangan</td>
<td>33723</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lagi keci itu sudah dihukum Tuan Raja Pulau Pinang sudah dinilai harga keci itu lima ribu lima ratus rial</td>
<td>5500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan lagi yang diambil oleh Tuan Sultan meriam besi empat pucuk berat pelurunya enam paun harganya empat ratus rial</td>
<td>400</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan lagi meriam besi empat pucuk berat pelurunya empat paun; harganya dua ratus enam puluh rial</td>
<td>260</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pemuras35 cakup36 empat pucuk; harganya seratus rial</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pemuras dua pasang-dua pasang; harganya enam puluh rial</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senapang tiga pucuk; harganya dua puluh empat rial</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ubat bedil tiga tong; harganya seratus lima rial</td>
<td>105</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jumlah ambilan Tuan Sultan empat laksra seratus tujuh puluh dua rial tiga suku</td>
<td>40172</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

35 Musketoon; blunderbuss.
36 Bell-mouthed pistol.
Table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rial</th>
<th>Duit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maka di dalam ini yang sudah wasil Tuan Sultan Mahmud yang dikirimnya di dalam kapal perang semata rial seribu rial</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wasil antar mari di dalam keci ladah [sic] seribu pikul, harganya dualapan ribu rial</td>
<td>8000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wasil harga keci seperti bubuh harga dahulu itu lima ribu lima ratus rial</td>
<td>5500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jumlah sudah wasil tiga fasal ini empat belas ribu lima ratus rial</td>
<td>14 500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan lagi ditolakkan sebahagian Tuan Sultan Mahmud seperti adat Nggeris bahagi delapan satu bahagi lima ribu dua puluh satu rial lima kupangsembilan duit</td>
<td>05 021.59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jumlah wasil dengan bahagian Tuan Sultan sembilan belas ribu lima ratus dua puluh se rial37 lima kupang sembilan duit.</td>
<td>19 521</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tinggal bakinya kepada Tuan Sultan Mahmud harta keci Tengku Sayid Husain dua puluh ribu enam ratus lima puluh se rial enam belas duit</td>
<td>20 651</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PENANG VIII

Malay letter, Jawi script, 1 folio/folded, 37.4 x 23.5 cm
Endorsement verso Malay letter in Romanised script: ‘December 1810 / Syde Hussain’
Endorsement in Jawi script: ‘This is Tengku Sayid Husain’s letter / on the fourth of Zulkaedah’
Heading: ‘Al-Mustahaqq’

A letter of sincerity from me, Tengku al-Sayyid al-Sharif Husain bin ‘Abdul Rahman ‘Aidid who is resident in the town of Pulau Pinang; may God deliver it to my friend, His Excellency Thomas Raffles, the honourable, intelligent and prudent.

The circumstance is, with regard to my friend’s request for the letter concerning Palembang, I have already given it to Tunku [t-n-k-w] Raden Muhammad. As to how my initiative can be for the good has already been mentioned in the letter. If my friend desires to open the letter as well as inspect it, you may open and peruse it. The circumstances are such, this is what is stated.

The letter is written on the fourth day of Dzulkaedah, 1225 Hegira in the year of Zul [1 December 1810 CE]. Finis.

Signature [of] al-Sayyid Husain ibn ‘Abdul Rahman ‘Aidid

Pulau Pinang 8

Warkah Tengku Sayid Syariff Husain bin Abdul Rahman Idid, satu lembar, 37.4 x 23.5 cm


Ehwal maka daripada hal sahabat beta pinta surat akan

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37 Se-rial is one real; thus dua puluh serial means twenty-one rial (Spanish dollars).
38 Resides.
Perebutan itu sudah beta beri kepada Tunku [t-n-k-w] Raden Muhammad; bagaimana ikhtiar beta boleh jadi baik itu sudah tersebut di dalam surat itu. Jika surat itu sahabat beta hendak buka lihat pun boleh sahabat beta buka lihat. Eh'wal ini lah dinyatakan.

Perbuat surat kepada empat haribulan Zulkaedah 1225 Sanah, tahun Zai. Tamat.

Alamat al-Sayid Husain ibn Abdul Rahman Aidid

III. THE PERAK LETTER

PERAK

Malay letter, Jawi script, 1 folio, 32.1 x 40 cm
Letter of Sultan Mansur Syah of Perak. Black chop
Addressed to Raffles at Malacca

Endorsement verso Malay letter in Raffles’ hand: ‘Rajah of Perak / Recd 9 Apr 1811 / [unreadable] / supplies in / undecipherable & / undecipherable’

Heading: ‘Qawlhu u l-Haqq’

An epistle of sincerity and varied gifts, that has enclosed within it uprightness and candour with affection and concord that is without bounds so long as there exist the heavenly sphere, sun and moon, be it night or day, from the Yang Di-Pertuan,1 most illustrious, who sits on the throne of government in the country of Perak Dar al-Ridzwan [the abode of Paradise] who possesses jurisdiction over all its districts. May it be delivered, we pray, to the presence of our friend, His Excellency Thomas Raffles Esquire, who resides in the country of Malacca Dar al-Aman [the abode of Peace], who rules over all its districts; whose praiseworthiness is widely known to all and who is wise and prudent in bringing enjoyment and welfare to every friend and companion near and far.

Following that, be it known to our friend that the letter conveyed by Yahaya has reached us together with its gifts in perfect condition. So we took it in hand with all gladness of heart and when it was unfolded its every line was carefully examined. We have understood everything that

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1 This letter, unlike all other Malay letters in the collection, does not mention the name of the Sultan. However, during this period, most of the sources are agreed that Sultan Abdul Malik Mansur Syah was the ruler of Perak. He ascended the Perak throne in 1806 after the death of his father, Sultan Ahmad bin Syah ('Marhum Bohsai'). He was dethroned in October 1818 following the successful invasion of Perak by Kedah. Sultan Abdul Malik Mansur Syah died in 1825. See R. Bonney, Kedah 1771–1821: The Search for Security and Independence, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1971, pp. 155, 157. See also R. O. Winstedt and R. J. Wilkinson, 'A History of Perak', JMBRAS 12(1), 1934, p. 128.
is mentioned in it, such as that our friend desires to invade the land of Java.

Furthermore, regarding the request for the various foodstuffs\(^2\) of Perak, such as cows, geese and pigs,\(^3\) they have never been reared in Perak. Further, the buffaloes and goats have been plagued by an epidemic only recently. With regard to rice, some is only beginning to be harvested. In the meantime we shall try to discuss its procurement to the extent of our ability. With regard to rice and other available food we shall make arrangements with our elders. The Orang Kaya Laksamana\(^4\) wishes to discuss the possibility of getting the junk of a Cantonese Chinese. The Chinese in Perak do not own junks. Chinese who enter Perak are transient merchants [Cina berdagang]. All the same, we shall discuss it if they agree with what is mentioned in our friend’s letter. We may be able to send them [the supplies] later.

Furthermore, it is not possible to ask our subjects now because even at this moment Perak is under threat of being invaded by the people of Kedah\(^5\) together with Tengku Long Puteh.\(^6\) His letter has reached the

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2. The gist of many of Raffles’ letters to the Malay rulers was about securing supplies of food for the British invasion force.

3. See note 10 below.

4. Orang Kaya Laksamana is the title of one of the eight great chiefs (orang besar delapan) of Perak. He takes precedence after the first of the four great chiefs (orang besar empat or orang empat di balai, the Big Four or the Court Four). Winstedt and Wilkinson say the full title is Orang Kaya-Kaya Laksamana Raja Mahkota. He was the one in authority of matters pertaining to rivers and the sea coast. His authority extended “up-river as far as the tide can reach, down-river to the line where the surf breaks on the bar and the grey mullet come to surface”. The duty of the laksamana was to guard against foreign enemies and to assist those in trouble at sea. He worked in concert with the syahbandar and examined incoming and outgoing ships. See Winstedt & Wilkinson, ‘A History of Perak’, pp. 146–149.

5. Ever since the time of Sultan Ahmaduddin’s reign Perak had been plagued by the wars with Kedah. It would appear that soon after Sultan Abdul Malik Mansur Syah succeeded his father, Perak was again threatened by Kedah. From the Thai sources we are informed that Kedah under Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin Halim Syah invaded Perak in 1812. Sultan Mansur was once again threatened with invasion by Kedah in 1815–16 when Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin was pressed by Rama II into attacking Perak. Ahmad Tajuddin himself had given his undertaking to the Siamese that he would ensure Perak submitted to the authority of Siam by the end of 1815. On the polities of Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin vis-à-vis the Siamese and as well as his anxiety over Perak’s refusal to submit to the latter, which compelled

Orang Kaya Laksamana, asking us to be prepared during these three months, for they will be coming. Some of them are already positioning at Krian.\(^7\) There are about 1,000 men. That is why we make it known to our friend so as to plan a perfect strategy. If it is true then we wish to send an emissary to you, the Raja of Malacca\(^8\) to seek advice and request assistance.

Concerning the intention of the great English raja to invade the land of Java, God willing, we shall join in prayers to ask God to grant an easy victory over the Dutch. In the circumstances, with regard to the provisions, whatever is available, God willing, if Perak is not in distress, and there is great desire, we shall have them speedily delivered to our friend. Following that, there is nothing that could be sent except a load [bahara]\(^9\) of tin, nine earthenware water jars decorated with a big fretted pattern which, including the Shanghai jar, makes ten altogether. May our friend accept them with whiteness of heart.

Under the circumstances we hereby state that this letter is written on the eighth of Rabi’ul-awal, on Tuesday, in the year 1226 Hegira [2 April 1811 CE].

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6. Tengku Long Puteh, a Siak chief, was the brother-in-law of Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin of Kedah. Winstedt labelled him as the ‘pirate husband’ of Tengku Jamjam, the Sultan’s sister.

7. Krian lies in the north of Perak, near the border with Kedah.

8. The reference would appear to be Raffles himself. However, the term Raja Malaka was commonly used by Munshi Abdullah to refer to Major W. Farquhar, the British Resident of Malacca.

9. Wilkinson wrote that at the turn of the 20th century one bahara was about 460 lb, and added that this might not have been the case in the earlier period. R. J. Wilkinson, *A Malay-English Dictionary*, Macmillan & Co. Ltd, London, 1959, Part 1, p. 65.
Warkah Sultan Perak [Mansur Syah] kepada Raffles, satu lembar; 32.1 x 40 sm

Warkat al-ikhlas wa tuhfat al-ajnas yang disertakan dalamnya tulus ikhlas kasih sayang, muafakat yang tiada berkeputusan, selagi ada cakrawala matalah, dan bulan fi 'lail wali awam iaitu daripada Yang Di-Pertuan Yang Maha Mulia semayam di atas singga[h]sana aka tahta [sic] kerajaan dalam negeri Perak Dar al-Ridwan yang mempunyai perintah pada segala daerahtnya; barang disampaikan Tuhan sararasekalian alam apalash kiranya kehadapan majlis sahabat beta Seri Paduka Thomas Raffles Esquire yang istirahat dalam negeri Melaka Dar al-Maman yang memerintahkan pada segala daerahtnya telah masyhurah kepujian itu sampai ke mana-mana serta dengan arif bijaksana kepada melakukan kesuakan dan kebajikan pada segala handai shabatnya yang garib dan ba' id Amin.


bicarakalah. Jikalau dia suka seperti mana yang tersebut dalam surat sahabat beta itu boleh kita suruh antar [sic] kemudian.


Ehwal, seperti makanan itu barang yang mana ada hadhir; insya'Allah jikalau tiada susah negeri Perak ada arad12 [sic, arap; harap?] yang basar [sic] beta menyuruh antarlah [sic] kepada sahabat beta dengan segeranya.

Kemudian daripada itu tiada apa yang dipersetakan; inilah timah sebahara kempit13 bekarawang [sic] besar sembilan biji; sepuluh dengan kempit nuja. Boleh sahabat kita terima dengan puiti hati.

Ehwal inilah kita nyatakan; diperbuat surat dua lapan haribulan Rabi‘ul-awal, hari Thalatha, pada 1226 Sanah tahun.

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10 Although the Jawi spelling is “b-a-lif-ba-ya” (babi) it could have been a spelling error for ‘bebek’ [b-a-lif/ba-kap] to denote ‘ducks’. It is quite common to use the phrase ‘tek bebek’ to refer to ducks in general.

11 Referring to Chinese of the Cantonese clan.

12 The Arabic word ‘i-r-a-dha (in Arabic script. ‘a-in-ra-dhat) could be from ‘iradhat’ or ‘iradah’ to mean ‘desire’ or ‘will’. However, the word could also be a short form for ‘redza’ meaning ‘consent’ or ‘willingness’. In the context of the above sentence in the letter, however, ‘desire’ is more likely.

13 An earthenware water-jar with a fretted pattern.
IV. THE PEDAS AND REMBAU LETTERS

The following letter written by Raja Ali of Pedas is of historical importance. Not only does it shed new light on the person of Raja Ali and the district of Pedas but, more importantly, it illuminates the relationship between Pedas and Rembau in the early 19th century. Written sources available on the history of Rembau and the chiefs of the ‘states’ of Johol, Sungai Ujong and Naning have been mostly based on the writings of Begbie and Newbold, who wrote what they witnessed or learned around 1831–32 and 1838–39 respectively. Historians have generally agreed that following Raja Ali’s failure to dislodge Raja Asil from his throne as the Raja of Rembau he sought temporary refuge at Sungai Nipah. But the following letter shows that as early as 1811 he was already at Pedas, not Sungai Nipah. Newbold himself described Raja Ali’s ‘stockaded house’ in 1833, and mentioned that he was already the Yang Dipertuan Besar in 1832.1

Both the Tuhfat al-Nafs and Hikayat Johor mentioned that Pedas had been a base for the Bugis chiefs since the mid-18th century.2 In late 1756, Daeng Kemboja and Raja Haji sought refuge in Pedas after their defeat at the hands of the Dutch in Malacca when they waged war against the latter with the collaboration of the Rembau chiefs. After the 1756–57 Bugis war with the Dutch, Bugis influence in Rembau became increasingly significant, and Pedas became their point of congregation until the early 19th century. Time and again the Bugis princes congregated at Pedas. Even when the Raja Di Baroh3 (Sultan Abdul Jalil Muadzam Syah) died in Selangor in January 1761, his body was first taken to Pedas, where Daeng Kemboja was resident, and only then taken to Riau for burial.

Raja Ali of Pedas, the author of the following letter, was himself half-Bugis. His father was Raja Haman, the brother of Sultan Ibrahim of Selangor. The ‘war’ declared by the Raja of Rembau in 1811, as mentioned in the Pedas letter, implies that the enmity between Raja Ali and the Raja of Rembau (probably his uncle Raja Asil)4 must have begun much earlier—even earlier than 1812. According to Newbold, Raja Asil was driven out of Rembau in 1812 by the penghulu and suku of the ‘state’ with the collaboration of Raja Ali.5

This early history of Negeri Sembilan is still in darkness in the sense that the absence of sources has made it almost impossible for historians to provide a clear picture. The sources provided by Western writers such as Newbold and Begbie have become invaluable because of the absence of other reliable sources. Although attempts have been made to combine both Western and Malay sources in the reconstruction of Negeri Sembilan history, generally historians have not been able to give a convincing picture of its history as, heretofore, neither the written nor oral sources were contemporary reports of any of the events.

Before the discovery of the Pedas letter, nowhere in the many sources known to historians has Raja Ali been named as the Tunku Besar of Pedas. Interestingly enough, the seal6 used by Raja Ali—despite the illegibility of the inscribed words—clearly mentions the name of Sultan Abdul Jalil.7 On another seal, undated but claimed by some to be Raja Ali’s seal when he was Yang Dipertuan Besar of Rembau, the name

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1 T. J. Newbold, British Settlements in the Straits of Malacca, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1971, Vol. 1, p. 120.
3 Raja of the lower lands or the land below.

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5 Newbold, British Settlements, Vol. 1, p. 120.
6 Following the shape of the Minangkabau seal in Sumatra, the seals used by Pedas and Rembau are both in leaf lotus [sic] design. See Jane Drake, A Kingdom of Words: Language and Power in Sumatra, Oxford University Press, New York, 1999, pp. 154, 163.
7 This writer has attempted to decipher the words on the seal, with great difficulty. However, the legible words inscribed are: ‘Sultan Abdul Jalil yang mempuysa tahta kerajaan dalam negeri [Sultan Abdul Jalil who owns the throne of government of the country] ... [Minangkabau?] menangku anak kapada [who confesses being son to] Sultan Abuh[l] Mahirudddin[?] yang mempuysa tahta kerajaan negeri [who owns the throne of government of the country of?] zillatub tah fi ‘l-alam’. See facsimile of the Rembau seal in Newbold, British Settlements, Vol. 1, facing p. 194. The name Abdul Jalil Muazam Syah appears to be the favourite title of Malay and Minangkabau kings.
inscribed was: ‘Sultan Abdul Jalil Muadzam Syah’. Until now no historian has known that Raja Ali—who was later to become the Yam Tuan Muda of Rembau and much later the Yam Tuan Besar—was already using the title of Tunku Besar, rendered in the Jawi script as ‘t-w-n-kw’ (‘tunku’ or ‘twanku’).

PEDAS I

Malay letter with enclosures; Jawi script, I folio, 29.6 x 44.4 cm
Letter of Raja Ali, the Tunku Besar of Pedas, with black seal, addressed to Raffles at Malacca
Heading: ‘Ya Qodiy al-Hajat’
Endorsement verso Malay letter in Raffles’ hand: ‘January 1811- Rajah Ali of Pedas’
Endorsement in Jawi script: ‘This letter is from Raja Ali of Pedas / on the sixteenth day of the month of Safar’

This letter of sincerity with a pure white heart from Raja Ali viz the Tunku Besar [principal prince] who resides in the land of Pedas with

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8 It is still unclear which Sultan was being referred to. While the Minangkabau ruler in the early 19th century was also called Sultan Abdul Jalil Muadzim [sic] Syah (Drakard, pp. 158, 163–164), Sultan Sulaiman’s heir to the throne of Johor, also known as Raja Di Baroh, was titled Sultan Abdul Jalil Muadzam Syah (1760–1761). He was supposed to have succeeded his father as the Yang Dipertuan Besar of Johor-Riau, but died soon after his father’s death in 1760. See R. J. Wilkinson (ed.), Papers on Malay Subjects, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1971, pp. 292–293.

9 A popular variant of the title ‘Yang Dipertuan’. ‘Yam Tuan Muda’ means the Underking.

10 O fulfiller of wishes.

11 Raja Ali was the son of Raja Haman, a Bugis whose title was Daeng Alampaki, brother of Sultan Ibrahim of Selangor. His mother was Tengku Puth—also known as Tengku Puteri—the daughter of the Minangkabau prince Raja Ijam. Raja Ali, according to Newbold’s description, circa 1835, was “about fifty years old, low in stature, dark in complexion, of a forbidding and rather ferocious aspect”. Newbold says, in disposition he was “crafty and determined, taciturn and deliberate in council; but prompt and decided in action”. An ambitious man, Raja Ali exploited a crisis that had culminated in a family feud between Raja Asil and the penghulu of Rembau. Asil’s son Raja Haji, having been refused consent to marry his sister-in-law by the penghulu of Rembau, had carried her off with force. Raja Ali, whose help was sought by Raja Asil, had instead conspired with the

12 It appears that the title Tunku Besar as chief of a district was already in use. This letter shows that Raja Ali was the territorial chief of Pedas before becoming Yam Tuan Muda of Rembau. Later, the title was inherited by his son-in-law Raja Sha’aban when he became Tunku Besar of Tampin in 1834.

13 Pedas or Padas was named after a small stream that had its confluence with the longer river, Batang Penajis, about a quarter of a mile nearer Sempong. Pedas, one of the three principal posts of Rembau, was situated on the right bank of the Batang Penajis about five or six miles further up. Newbold described Pedas as two or three miles “in advance of Ramuan Cina Kecil”. Raja Ali’s stockaded house was situated on the hill facing the river. There is no mention of Raja Ali being ruler of Pedas in R. O. Winstedt, ‘Negri Sembanian: The History, Polity and Beliefs of the Nine States’, IMBRAS, 12(3), 1934.
until we receive news about the man we sent as messenger. As for Tambi Ismail, who says that he wished to return within six days, we restrained him because since our friend’s desire has not been fulfilled, what use is it for him to return? There isn’t any souvenir as token of purify of heart except for a long kris used by ourself.

Written on the sixteenth day of the month of Safar 1226 AH [12 March 1811 CE].

14 Finis.

And one other thing. If it is possible on our friend’s part, we would like to request a screw-barrelled gun used by our friend, with grooves inside the barrel.

Pedas 1

Warkah Raja Ali, Pedas kepada Raffles, dengan meterai hitam, satu lembar, 29.6 x 44.4 sm

Ini surat tulus dan ikhlas serta suci putih hati daripada Raja Ali iaitu Tunku [t-w-n-k-u] Besar yang ada duduk semayam dalam tanah Pedas yang [sic] dan dalam kesusaian daripada sekalian hal ehwal; barang disampaikan Allah ta’ala [sic, ta’ala] kepada sahabat kita Seri Paduka Tamas Rafies Askoyar yang ada terhenti di dalam kota negeri Melaka iaitu yang punya akan [sic] perintah tahta [sic] kerajaan dan kebesaran Tuan Seri Paduka Gilbatat Ladr [sic] Minto, Gurnor Ceneral15 [sic]; barang berlebih-lebih kebesaran dan kemuliaan dalam negeri dina ini, Amin.

Waba’adaah kemudian daripada itu maka kita khabarkan kepada sahabat kita akan hal surat yang dikirimkan sahabat kita dengan bingkisan kalamkari16 Eropah dengan ubat bedil suatu tempat dan Tambi Ismail dengan kawan-kawannya empat orang telah sampailah kepada kita dalam tanah Pedas. Maka kita sambut surat itu seperti adat raja-raja yang besar-besar; kita hormatkan. Maka kita buka surat itu; maka kita lihat di dalamnya mengatakan sahabat kita berkehendakkan Undang-Undang Perpatih Sebatang dengan hikayat-hikayat cerita


Daripada Tambi Ismail mengatakan hendak pulang dalam enam hari, kita tahankan dia, sebab belum boleh dapat maksud sahabat kita. Apa faedahnya pulang?

Suatupun tiada tanda suci hari hanyalah keris panjang pakaian kita.

Tersurat pada enam belas bulan Safar 1226 Sanah. Tamat.

Dan sebagai lagi, jikalau boleh pada sahabat kita, mintak senapang terkul17 pakaian sahabat kita, berpesegi dalamnya.

**PEDAS II**

Malay letter, Jawi script; 1 folio, 44.5 x 30.4 cm

[Enclosure in letter of Raja Ali to Raffles, 12 March 1811]. Without seal

Addressed to Raffles at Malacca, with endorsement verso in Raffles’ hand: ‘Enclosure in letter / from Raja Ali / of Pedas.’

This is to explain all matters that have been ordered by the Tuan from Malacca to carry a letter to Raja Ali at Pedas. After three days and nights on the journey together, four men and I arrived in the land of Pedas and I stopped at one place and I bid the men that I brought along from Malacca to go and inform that I have come bearing a letter from the Great Chief at Malacca, Agent of the Yang Dipertuan, His Excellency who occupies the throne of government of the General of Bengal in order that my lord’s name will be famous in all districts of the land of Rembau.

14 Note that the date endorsed by Raffles is different from the date given by the scribe.
15 G-w-r-n-r Ch-n-r-a-l.
16 A type of fabric.
And then there came the chief, Raja Ali, who brought the silver platter of tobacco, accompanied by several men who received the epistle, and took me to his house. The letter was then read and then guns were arranged on buildings and fired—seven guns altogether. After that the letter was read by the Tengku Putih and the guns were fired.

It was then maghrīb time; and all the people of the country who were nearby became alarmed and started the rumour that the country of Pedas was at war till morning. Then came all the people informing me that all of them fled without taking any food or drinks because of hearing the cannon shots at the stockade. “For ages it had never been the inherited tradition in this land of Rembau to fire cannons in the stockade in such a manner,” they said.

I then requested whatever was [mentioned] in the letter. The raja said that the Perpath Sebatang was the ancestor of the late Yam Tuan Besar who died at Sri Menanti in times past. “It’s finished,” he said to me, “but it is a curse.” And I then counselled him. And he said, “God willing, I shall be able to relate its origins, but please send a letter to our friend at Malacca first. Then we shall call the penghulu of Sungai Ujong to join us because the perpath sebatang is in Pagar Ruyong. There are two laws of perpath sebatang, one with the penghulu and the second with the Raja. Therefore I personally wish to summon him to be brought here; the rajas in Rembau have no knowledge of it. They may give a false account.”

“Further to that the [laws of] perpath sebatang are of three manifests, namely: as the descendants; as greatness of station; and as customs and traditions. It is what is called the Law of the penghulu, the Law of the Raja and the Law of the rakyat. The one that exists presently, that is being practised by Rembau, is farcical law only. It is because of that the Yam Tuan has not responded to our friend’s letter. He says whatever he wants to say, but there will be a payment involved. What is known by the penghulu is the name of the place, the boundary, [and] the name of the suku. What is known by the rakyat [people] is names of all fruits, animals, rivers, trees, medicines. To the raja is [knowledge of] the origins of all those.” End of account.

**Pedas 2**

**Lampiran dalam surat Raja Ali, Pedas, 44.5 x 30.4 sm**


Adalah waktu maghrīb, maka segala isi negeri yang dekat-dekat itu hubergadu [k-w-b-r-k-a-d-w; sic, gobar gadu], memang negeri Pedas perang hingga padi hari. Maka datanglah segala orang itu mengatakan, “Sahaya semuanya habis hari dengan tiada makan minum sebag mendengar bedil di ku di; sebab saman berzaman, cutul [sic, jual] berjulat, yang tiada pasuakan dalam tanah Rembau ini membakar meriam dalam ku di yang sedemminkan ini.”

Maka sahaya pun mintaklah seperti yang mana ada dalam surat itu. Maka kata raja itu “Adapun Perpath Sebatang itu—itulah datuk

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18 Evening or at dusk; usually referring to the evening prayers.
20 The penghulu referred to could be the penghulu adat who was most knowledgeable about the genealogy and customary laws. In this sense the post is synonymous with the lembaga, who was the head of the suku (clan) and stood between the territorial chiefs and the common people represented by the buapak (elders).


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REMBAU

Rembau is the name of the interior state that lies between Selangor to the north and Malacca to the west. In the early 19th century, Rembau, the capital, was the crowning place of the deputed sovereign of the Minangkabau, who assumed the title of Yang Dipertuan Besar. But Rembau, as a state, had her own Yam Tuan Muda, the first candidate being Raja Asil, who was the son of Raja Adil, the second Minangkabau prince who became Yang Dipertuan Besar. The Yang Dipertuan Besar at some stage resided at Sri Menanti. The Yang Dipertuan could also be living at Bandar, Pedas and Sempong [Simpang]. To the north of the state of Rembau lie Sri Menanti and Sungai Ujong; to the south, Nanging and Johol. In the early 19th century, Rembau contained two divisions—Rembau Hulu and Rembau Hilir—each under its four suku who were subject to the control of the penghulu. The Linggi River formed the channel of communication by water between Rembau and the Malacca Straits. The three principal posts of Rembau, situated on the banks of the Batang Penajis, were Sempong, Pedas and Bandar.

The history of Rembau’s relations with Minangkabau became clearer when in 1721 some Rembau chiefs from the state approached the Minangkabau Yang Dipertuan in Pagar Ruyong, Yang Dipertuan Patah Sultan Abdul Jalil (1719–1780),22 to send one of the princes to Rembau and be made Yang Dipertuan. According to both Wilkinson and Winstedt, the Minangkabau prince referred to was probably Raja Kasah. But some believe that the said prince was the controversial Raja Malewar.23 The presence of this prince, who was installed as the Raja of Rembau, was intended as a deterrent to Bugis incursions and Raja Keceil’s imperialistic designs.

The occurrence of the name of Sultan Abdul Jalil in Negeri Sembilan tradition is interesting because the seal bearing this name used on the following Rembau letter was similar to the seal used on the Pedas letter. Despite partial illegibility of the inscription, the seal, nevertheless,

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23 Regarding Raja Malewar, Jesselin de Jong wrote, “Malewa, Malewar or Murewa is not a Minangkabau or Negeri Sembilan name, but undeniably is a Bugis-Makassar one.” He argued that the name was more of a political myth created by oral tradition in Negeri Sembilan. See P. E. Jesselin de Jong, ‘The Dynastic Myth of Negeri Sembilan (Malaya),’ BKL, 131(2/3), 1975, pp. 278–305.
appears to bear the name of Sultan Abdul Jalil. It is probable that the rajas of Pedas and Rembau both had seals either given by Sultan Abdul Jalil Muadzam Syah of Johor (also known as Raja Di Baroh) or the Yang Dipertua Abdul Jalil of the Minangkabau state in West Sumatra.

Rembau, including Keru and Tampin, had a population of about 9,000 in the early decades of the 19th century. According to Newbold, who wrote in the 1830s, besides Malays the Orang Benua (aboriginal tribes) also inhabited the slopes of the mountains and the forests of Rembau. The first Yang Dipertua Muda of Rembau was Raja Asil, son of Raja Adil, the second Minangkabau prince. He was appointed by the Yang Dipertua Besar Raja Itam with the concurrence of the penghulu of the four Minangkabau states. Under the penghulu were the eight suku (tribes), into which the population of Rembau was divided.

Upon taking possession of Malacca in 1795, the British concluded a commercial and friendly pact with Rembau as a separate state. In 1798, Raja Asil became the Yang Dipertua Muda of Rembau. His reign was interrupted when he was usurped by his grand-nephew, Raja Ali of Pedas, who became Yam Tuan Muda in 1815. The following letter, which presumably fell into Raffles’ hands at Malacca, was from the Yang Dipertuan Besar who also resided during this period (1810–11) and was addressed to Tamil-born Tambi Ismail who, as indicated in the Pedas letter, was sent as Raffles’ messenger to meet Raja Ali of Pedas. Although the name of the Yang Dipertuan Besar was not mentioned in the following letter, he was probably Raja Lenggang, who was the Yang Dipertuan Besar (1808–1824) residing in Rembau at that time.

REMBAU

Malay letter, Jawi script, 1 folio, 32.3 x 31.1 cm
Letter of Yang Di Pertuan of Rembau, with black seal bearing inscription: ‘Sultan Abdul Jalil who owns the throne of government of the country of _ [Menangkabau?] who confesses being the son of Sultan Abdul _ [?] who owns the throne of government of the country of _ [Johor?] _ [indecipherable],
Addressed to Tambi Bidin at Malacca
Endorsement verso Malay letter: ‘Ismail’s note / relative [? to the recovery / of a debt’
Endorsement in Jawi script: ‘This is the Raja of Rembau’s letter to Tambi Ismail’ [sic]

This is the word of the Yang Di-Pertuan Besar [Paramount Ruler] at Rembau to Tambi Bidin. With regard to Tambi Bidin sending Tambi Ismail to collect debts from Haji Jamaluddin at Kepayang, amounting to 72 ringgit, it seems that since Tambi Ismail had become very ill he implored us to collect it on his behalf; and so we solicited for the payment of the said sum of money.

Furthermore, earlier you had sent Abdul Rahim to collect from Haji Jamaluddin. He paid a sum of 3 ringgit and 50, along with beads of various kinds worth 4 ringgit and 50; thus totalling 8 ringgit in all. He then handed us 12 ringgit. We borrowed 10 ringgit; we have used the money to purchase tin. Later, we shall send it to the messenger in Malacca, Tambi Ismail, who will accept it if you, Tambi Bidin, concur with our action. Should our action be unacceptable, please then proceed upstream to Sungai Ujong and deliberate with Haji Jamaluddin. Rather than harbouring feelings of shame towards you, we would prefer helping

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24 See note 7 above.
25 Wilkinson gives an interesting account of the role of the name of Sultan Abdul Jalil Muadzam Syah in Negeri Sembilan history. It seems that his name appeared on the seals of Raja Adil, the rulers of Tampin and the last ruler of Naning. See R. J. Wilkinson, ‘Notes on the Negri Sembilan’ (1911) in Wilkinson (ed.), Papers on Malay Subjects, pp. 292–293.
27 The Yang Di Pertuan Besar [or Yam Tuan Besar], Raja Lenggang (1808–1824), See Winstedt, ‘History of Negeri Sembilan’, p. 62. Wilkinson mentions that from 1798 CE there were two great princely families: one in Sri Menanti, the seat of the first Yang Di Pertuan Besar, Raja Melewar, and the other in Rembau and Jelebu. See Wilkinson, ‘Notes on the Negri Sembilan’, p. 23. Raja Asil, the Yam Tuan Muda of Rembau took the title of Sultan Muhammad Syah, Yang Di Pertuan Muda of Rembau, in 1798. According to Wilkinson also, about the year 1812, Raja Haji, son of Raja Asil, abducted a woman from Rembau and took her to his father’s residence. The aggrieved parties urged Raja Ali to lead them against his grand-uncle. After shrewdly advising his grand-uncle to take shelter in Malacca, Raja Ali usurped the throne to become the next Yam Tuan Muda of Rembau. See Begbie, The Malayan Peninsula, pp. 139–141. In the Pedas letter II (above), it is clearly implied that even as early as 1811, Raja Ali and the Yam Tuan Muda of Rembau were not on friendly terms.
28 A term used to refer to a Tamil-born ‘Malay’. Tambi denotes the person is young, generally a boy. In Tamil it means ‘younger brother’.
Rembau

Surat Yang Di-Pertuan Besar Rembau, 32.3 x 31.1 sm


PART II

LETTERS FROM THE JOHOR-RIAU-LINGGA KINGDOM

The sultanate of Johor-Riau and its dependencies underwent a period of significant transformation in the early 17th century following the murder in 1699 of Sultan Mahmud Syah, who died without leaving any offspring. With the establishment of the Bendahara king soon after Mahmud's death, the kingdom of Johor was no longer the true Malay kingdom that had inherited the Malacca dynastic line. The period of the 18th and early 19th centuries that followed was marked by a political imbroglio in Johor, manifested in the Minangkabau conquest of 1718 and the ascendancy of the Bugis in 1722. The emergence of a Bugis nobility in the kingdom of Johor and its dependencies brought about a new political structure in the Malay kerajaan. By their smooth manoeuvres in the political intrigues in which they got involved, and through intermarriage with members of the Malay ruling families, the Bugis princes had by the 18th and early 19th centuries gained a position of influence and a strong political foothold in the Johor-Riau ruling house. While the Malay rajas still proclaimed and perceived themselves as the Yang Dipertuan Besar of the Johor Kingdom and its dependencies, yet it was the Bugis underkings who would shape the new power structure in the so-called kingdom of Johor through the institution of the Yang Dipertuan Muda or Yam Tuan Muda at Riau.

For the Malays, the period not only witnessed a time of decadence in Malay polity and dissension among Malay rajas but, more importantly, Malay hegemony was now seriously challenged by the rise of new centres of kerajaan demonstrated by the presence of the European powers who could dictate terms and insist on being treated as equals with all the ceremonial and political trappings accrued to any kerajaan. While the Johor Malay sultans were already under the shadow of patronage of the successive Bugis Yam Tuan Muda based at Riau,¹ both the Bugis and

¹ The Bugis ascendancy coincided with the reign of Sultan Sulaiman (1722–1760).
Malay royal houses had to deal with the Dutch and the English and learn how to cope with the new situational reality that was confronting the kingdom of Johor, and all its dependencies.

The following letters from Johor-Riau-Lingga and Singapore in the early 19th century illustrate the conditions and situation of the so-called kingdom of Johor and its dependencies. The first letter is from Sultan Mahmud Syah (1761–1811), the last Sultan of Johor-Riau-Lingga and all its dependencies, whose court was at Lingga, the capital of the kingdom. 2 The second letter is from Temenggong Abdul Rahman who, during the period when Raffles executed his scheme to gain acquisition of the island of Singapore, was recognized as the de facto ruler of Singapore who “governs the country of Singapore in his own name and in the name of the Sree Sultan Hussein Mahumud Shah [sic]...” 3.

Although Tengku Hussain was installed as the new Sultan of Singapore 4 by Raffles because he realized the importance of having a de jure Malay sultan participating in the transfer of the island, it was nonetheless Temenggong Abdul Rahman who, being more intelligent than Hussain, played a major role in the negotiations with the British in the cession of Singapore. 5 However, despite being ‘Ruler of Singapore’ it was the East India Company that was in authority over the port of Singapore. 6

V. THE JOHOR AND SINGAPORE LETTERS

JOHOR

Malay letter, Jawi script, 1 folio 22.7 x 37 cm
Letter of Sultan Mahmud Syah of Johor with charcoal seal at top right-hand corner, addressed to Baron Philip Dundas, Resident Governor of Penang
Endorsement verso: Malay letter
Heading: ‘Qultuqhadha’ 4

This letter, with sincerity and pure heart and without regrets, comes from Paduka Seri Sultan Mahmud Syah who reigns with majesty and greatness in Johor and Pahang with all its dependencies. May the will of God convey this letter to our friend Beherma [or Bihrama] Philip Dundas, President [sic] Governor, ruler of Pulau Pinang who is wise and clever and whose fame is known everywhere.

We wish to inform our friend that we have received our friend’s letter which was delivered by Captain T-n-y-d [Tait] 5. With regard to our friend’s request that we search for the men who have committed bad deeds on our friend’s men [and] Captain Karniki [sic, Carnegie], 2 we shall try our level best to do so. But please trust in God, lord of all the worlds as our friend should not only hope on us, [though] we shall look for them to the best of our ability. That is all.

Dated 25 Dzulhijjah, on Thursday, at 12.00 o’clock, in the year 1221 AH [5 March 1807 CE].

Johor

Warkah Sultan Mahmud Syah, satu lembar, 22.7 x 37 sm, dengan metateri hitam, dialamatkan kepada Beherma Philip Dundas, Residen Gabenor Pulau Pinang

1 I am saying thus.
2 James Carnegie was a prominent merchant in Penang. Lee Kam Hing, The Sultanate of Aceh: Relations with the British 1760–1824, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1995, p. 79.
Bahawa ini surat tulus dan ikhlas serta suci putih hati hening dan
ernih yang tiada menaruh ghalat dan cemar di dalamnya taitu daripada
Paduka Seri Sultan Mahmud Syah yang bersemanyam di atas takhta
kerajaan dan kebesaran dan kemuliaan di dalam negeri Johor dan
Pahang serta daerah takluknya sekalijian. Maka barang disampaikan
oleh Tuhan sarwa alam sekalijian jua kiranya datang ke hadapan
manjelis [sic] sahabat kita Beherma3 [b-h-r-m-a] Philip Dundas,
Presidant [sic, p-r-s-y-d-a-n-t] Gurnador [Gabenor], raja yang
merenntah di dalam negeri Pulau Pinang; serta arif lagi bijaksana;
telah masihurlah warta ihramnya serta nama yang kepuijan sampai
ke mana-mana adanya.

Waba adah daripada itu maka adalah kita menyatakan kepada
sahabat kita seperti surat sahabat yang dibawa oleh Kapitan Tenid4
[sic, Tait] itu telah sampailah kepada kita dengan selamat sempurnanya.
Maka kita pun mafiulah akan barang yang tersebut di dalamnya itu;
mentaftan ikhwalnya [sic] orang yang berhati jahat atas orang-orang
sahabat kita, Kapitan Karniki [k-r-n-y-k-y]5 itu; serta sahabat kita
mintok tolol carikan kepada kita dengan seboleh-bolehnya. Melainkan
telah harabliah [sic] sahabat kita kepada Tuhan sarwa alam sekalijian;
dan janganlah sahabat kita harab [sic] kepada kita serta kita carikan-
dengan seboleh-bolehnya; itulah adanya.

Termaktub kepada dua puluh lima hari bulan Dzulhijjah hari Khamis,
jam pukul dua belas, tarih 1221 Sanah.

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6 This Singapore letter confirms what Winstedt wrote regarding Abdullah, the elder brother, who rightfully should have been
the successor of Abdul Rahman but was bypassed by the British in favour of the younger Ibrahim. This letter is also interesting in that
the Temenggong wrote to Raffles with the intention of influencing the latter
to appoint the Tengku Besar as the successor of Sultan Hussain,7 i.e. the
Sultan of Singapore, and Abdullah as the Temenggong after his death.8
Although the Temenggong mentions in the letter 'our two sons',9 there
can be no doubt that he is referring to Sultan Hussain's eldest son, also
referred to as Tengku Besar.10 Hussain had a son styled as 'Tengku
Besar' in 1819. This is mentioned in two letters written in 1819 by
Temenggong Abdul Rahman, one addressed to Adrian Koek of Malacca,
and the other to the Bugis Yamin Muda, Raja Jaafar. There is also
another letter from the 'Raja of Singapura' addressed to the Yamin Muda
at Riau mentioning that he is a little anxious on account of his son
when the raja of Johor informs him about the many ships with soldiers
that have arrived in Singapore.11 Certainly, the son referred to is not
Tengku Ali, who was too young at that time. When his father died in
1835, Ali was only eleven years old. Tun Ibrahim, who was fifteen when
his father died in 1825, eventually became the Temenggong of Johor and

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3 See Penang Letters, fn. 23 above.
4 T-n-i-i-d [Jawi: ta-nun-ya-dal]. The writer could have inadvertently put an extra dot
on the Jawi letter [a], thus rendering another consonant in [nun]. It is probably
ta-ya-dal, meaning 'Ted' [Tait].
5 The second 'k' (pronounced 'kafl') in the spelling of the name is interchangeable
with the letter 'g' (pronounced 'ga'). Thus the Jawi spelling 'k-r-n-y-k-y' could
also be pronounced 'k-r-n-y-g-y', or 'Carnegie'.

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6 See R. O. Winstedt, History of Johore (1365–1895), MBRAS Reprint No. 6,
Kuala Lumpur, 1979, p. 91.
7 Hussain's son Tengku Ali did not succeed him, but instead became Sultan of
Muar after forgoing his rights over Johor. See Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir, The
Hikayat Abdullah (an annotated translation by A. H. Hill), Oxford University
8 He died on 8 December 1825.
9 It was not uncommon for Malays to refer to children of closely related families
as 'our sons' when speaking to someone close.
10 Being Temenggong, he could not have given the title of Tengku Besar to his elder
son. The title came into prominence c. 1700 CE when the Johor princes adopted
the title and the Tun was instead borne by the sons of the non-royal Temenggongs.
11 For the relevant letters see W. E. Maxwell, 'The Founding of Singapore',
JIBRAS, 17, 1886, pp. 104–113, reprinted in MBRAS Reprint No. 1, Singapore
was finally installed as Temenggong Seri Maharaja on 19 August 1841 with the title of Seri Maharaja of Johor.

Although the name of the Tengku Besar has never been revealed, Abdullah Munsiy once written that Sultan Hussain had another son, named Tengku Abdul Jalil. Even though he was not an ‘anak gahara’ as his mother was not of royal birth, it was he who helped to organize his father’s funeral, implying that he was much older than Ali. So, could Tengku Abdul Jalil be the said Tengku Besar? Tengku Ali, according to Winstedt, was too young to be recognized as Sultan, and it was not until 1855 that he was made sultan to succeed Sultan Hussain after twenty long years of waiting. It appears that when Abdul Rahman died in December 1825, his eldest son Tun Abdullah failed to succeed him, but instead was bypassed by Tun Ibrahim, also known as Tengku Cik, who succeeded his father in 1833, although it was not until 19 August 1841 that he was officially recognized by the British as the Temenggong of Johor.

12 According to Abdullah, when Sultan Hussain died it was Tengku Abdul Jalil, together with Tun Ibrahim, the Temenggong’s second son, who tried to arrange for the body to be taken to Riau [sic, Lingga] for burial beside his father, Sultan Mahmud Syah, but they failed due to opposition from the wife and children of the late Sultan. Hussain was thus laid to rest in Tranquerah, Malacca. See Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir, The Hikayat Abdullah, pp. 278–279.
13 Winstedt, History of Johore, p. 92.
14 Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir, The Hikayat Abdullah, p. 278.

SINGAPORE

Malay letter, Jawi script, 1 folio, 25 x 39.5 cm
Letter of Engku Temenggong with round-shaped charcoal seal bearing the inscription ‘Al-wakil / Al-Sultan Mahmud Syah / Datuk Temenggong Sri Maharaja / cucu Temenggong Paduka Raja / 1221 Sanah’ addressed to Raffles, Lieutenant Governor-General at Bencoolen. Letter folded in yellow cloth with wrapper bearing Jawi script: ‘The addressee of this letter is Mr. Raffles General [sic] at Bencoolen’

Endorsement in roman script: Sir T. S. Raffles Esq.
Heading: ‘Qauluh u’l-Haqq wa Kalamuhu wa’l Siddiq’

An epistle of sincerity and straightforwardness along with a gift of various things that has enclosed within it uprightness and candour along with purity and whiteness of heart that is without limit and time as long as the revolution of the sun and the moon exists till eternity, that is from us Engku Temenggong who is stationed at present in the country of Singapore; and may it be conveyed by God of all the worlds to arrive before the council of our friend the Honourable Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, Lieutenant Governor-General [sic] of Bencoolen; for he is the most noble, faithful, wealthy and, above all, benevolent as well as knowledgeable and wise; expert in conducting the rule of justice and of gracious and prudent character and skilful at winning affection by relieving the distress of all friends and companions and also liberal towards all slaves and plebeians. And due to that, the fame of his advantageous and praiseworthy name spreads to all countries that are above and below the wind and [he] enjoys good health and peace and may he attain long life and bountiful profit.

Subsequent to that, be it understood by our friend that our purpose in sending this humble piece of paper is to make it our substitute for conversation with our friend as well as making plain [the contents] in it. Furthermore, since the departure of our friend from Singapore, we have not been at ease, but have had endless sorrow and interminable longing for our friend; concerning our two sons, firstly Tengku Besar and

15 “Delegate of Sultan Mahmud Syah / Datuk Temenggong Sri Maharaja / grandson of Temenggong Paduka Raja / 1221 Hegira”.
16 His full title was Dato’ Temenggong Seri Maharaja Abdul Rahman. He was also referred to as Dato’ Temenggong.
secondly Tun Abdullah, there are no others. We are placing great hopes on our friend to verify assist us. If we were to die\(^{17}\) and the Sultan is also gone, the Tengku Besar is the one who could likely succeed him, and our son ‘Tun Abdullah can be our successor.’\(^{18}\) Such is the case. Following that, there is nothing to accompany this letter, except for our hope against hope that there is nobody else to depend on but our friend. Many salutations and may friendship be enhanced and it is only our friend’s love and affection that is perpetual.

Written on the 27th day of Dzulhijjah, Monday, in the Hegira year of 1239 [22 Aug. 1824 CE].\(^{19}\)

**Singapura**

**Warkah Engku Temenggong, satu lembar, 25 x 39.5 cm**


\(^{17}\) Temenggong Abdul Rahman died on 8 December 1825. He was succeeded by his son, Tun Ibrahim or Daeng Ronggek, also known as Tengku Chik and Daeng Kecil.

\(^{18}\) That is, to succeed as Temenggong.

\(^{19}\) Raffles was in Singapore between 10 October 1822 and 8 June 1823. He returned to Bencoolen via Java where he made a brief stopover in the Batavia roads on 25 June while Lady Sophia Raffles, who was in ‘a very delicate state of health’, went on shore for a few days. Raffles himself remained on board his ship throughout the stopover. In the third week of July his ship was still in the Java seas. See Lady Sophia Raffles, *Memoir of the Life and Public Services of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles*, Oxford University Press, Singapore, 1991, pp. 550–551.

\(^{20}\) Written elaborately up to this point in decorative *khat* script as the opening marker of the letter.

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21 Monday, 24 August 1823.
VI. THE RIAU LETTERS

The Riau-Lingga Archipelago was the name given by Dutch geographers to the group of numerous islands, islets, rocks and shoals which lies between Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula towards the eastern end of the Malacca Strait. Riau lies about fifty miles south of Singapore, on a strait formed by several small islands and the island of Bintan, which is the largest island in the archipelago. Riau, which was the seat of the Malay kerajaan of Johor in the 18th century, is located near Tanjung Pinang. North of it is the island of Singarang, and west is Penang. When Riau was a Dutch settlement after the opening of Singapore in 1819, it was a free port; the staple exports were black pepper and gambier from the island of Bintan.

Riau’s history is well discussed in Raja Ali Haji’s Tuhfat al-Nafis and Winstedt’s History of Johore. Riau, which was also a centre of Malay cultural activities in the time of Raja Ali Haji, which came to prominence in 1722 when Raja Sulaiman, through the assistance of the Bugis princes, became Sultan of Johor and Pahang with the title of Badr al-Alam Syah, following the expulsion from Riau of his rival claimant, the adventurer Raja Kecil, in the preceding year. The event also witnessed the ascendency of the Bugis in Riau with the appointment of Daeng Marewah, the oldest of the Bugis chiefs, as the Yang Dipertuan Muda of Riau. Through inter-marriages of the Bugis princes and ladies of Malay royalty, Bugis political hold over the Malay aristocracy was strengthened. Daeng Parani, who had led the attack against Raja Kecil, married Sultan Sulaiman’s sister, and Daeng Monompo, another Bugis chief who took the title of Raja Tua (old raja), married the sultan’s aunt.

By the treaty of 1722 signed by the Bugis princes and Sultan Sulaiman, the Malays and the Bugis undertook to share political power. Riau became the seat of the Sultanate of Johor and Pahang. Under the second Yang Dipertuan Muda, Daeng Celak, who succeeded his brother Daeng Marewah in 1728, Riau became actively involved in gambier planting pioneered first by Bugis and Malay entrepreneurs employing Chinese labour. However, the prosperity of Riau and the growing influence of the Bugis chiefs brought jealousy and fear to the Malays and alarmed the Dutch in Malacca whose tin monopoly was disregarded and sea trade was disturbed by piracy.

Although the Malays made several overtures to secure Dutch assistance to expel the Bugis from Riau, they failed miserably until after the death of Raja Haji in 1784 when the Dutch were able to free Riau from Bugis control. But while the Malay–Dutch treaty that was signed following the expulsion of the Bugis gave recognition to the then Sultan Mahmud as the legitimate ruler of Riau, the treaty nevertheless stated that “the kingdom and port had become by the right of war the property of the Dutch which the Malays would hold as fief under certain conditions”. This caused so much unhappiness to the Malays that the sultan tried various means through both diplomatic persuasion and military campaigns to dislodge the Dutch presence, even to the extent of engaging the help of the Illanuns from Tempasuk in 1787, but all in vain. Because of the tense relations between Dutch Malacca and the Malays, Sultan Mahmud was forced to flee from Riau. Finally, after several pleas from the Malays to make peace with the Dutch in Malacca, and also helped by the diplomatic efforts of the sultans of Trengganu and Selangor, the Dutch East India Company agreed in 1795 to make peace with Sultan Mahmud in the hope that it could bring back the prosperity of Riau. Mahmud decided to leave Riau and established the seat of his kingdom in Lingga in 1799. In 1805, Raja Jaafar, son of the famous Raja Haji, succeeded Yam Tuan Muda Ali as the Yang Dipertuan Muda of Riau. The Malay kerajaan of Riau-Lingga then became divided, with Riau the seat of Bugis power and Lingga the centre of kerajaan for the Malay sultans. The Malay raja, Sultan Mahmud, while claiming to be the ‘sovereign of the Johor kingdom and all its dependencies’ remained in occupation of Lingga with his residence at Daik, and the Bugis Yam Tuan Muda or Underking was at Penang of Riau.

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3 Ibid., p. 64.

4 Contrary to what many have written, it is clear from the royal seal of Sultan Mahmud that he established his seat of government at Lingga in 1799. See the seal on his letters.
RIAU I

Letter from Thomas Stamford Raffles to the Raja Muda of Riau

After compliments.

It is now a long time since I have been informed that many bad men and pirates were in the habit of harbouring at Riau, but now since I have come to reside in Malacca, I have heard intelligence which is extremely bad and extremely distressing to be related. The name of this very wicked man to whom it alludes is Raja Busu and with him are his two brothers, Raja Indud and Raja Isa. With regard to Raja Indud, he has lately taken a Bugis vessel of the kind named Panchalan [pencalang] in the straits of Dryou (Duyong?).

With regard to Raja Busu, he formerly took and plundered a Chinese junk in Riau, and in the past month a vessel of Mr. Hare's was detained for a long time in Riau on account of those pirates who were waiting for her without.

After this there was a perahu belonging to Malacca [sic] which was returning from Palembang to Malacca with a crew of twelve men, all of whom were murdered by Raja Busu at the mouth of the Muar. Also within these two or three days there was a Chinese junk attacked by Raja Busu while coming into Malacca [sic] and though it escaped by flight there were a great many killed and wounded by him. Concerning each of these circumstances, I wish to make the strongest representation to my friend. Let not therefore my [sic] friend or any that are under his authority give any assistance to these bad people. Whoever becomes the friend or gives any assistance to those who are bad, are to be reckoned the same as those who are bad. Such is the law among the English. Let therefore our [sic] friend give notice to every Penghulu or headman under the government of Riau to apprehend every bad man of the kind and bind him in fetters and send him to Malacca [sic] and as soon as he arrives at Malacca [sic] the Raja of Malacca [sic] will cause him to be hanged on Pulau Jawa, * and at this present time the Raja of Malaca has constructed a new gallows [sic] for the execution of the aforesaid pirate.

Besides with regard to this Raja Busu he is so very bad a man that I must request my friend to cause him to be seized with the utmost expedition and send him to Malaca [sic] agreeably to the request of the Governor. Let it be recollected that when the English gave up Riau to Sultan Mahmud in order that he might exercise the powers of government over it, they counted for certain that no pirates would be harboured there if affairs were properly administered as it must be the fault of Riau if pirates were allowed to carry on their ravages between Riau and Malaca [sic]. For this reason I have by this letter forewarned my friend to pay particular attention to the state of his government. If my friend be not sufficiently versed in the management of such affairs and do not get rid of people of this description at once, the English will be under the necessity of sending a ship-of-war to take care of the matters themselves, which may not be pleasant to the Raja. This is all I have to say.

Written on the 10th of Safar 1226 [6 March 1811 CE].

RIAU II

Malay letter, Jawi script, 1 folio, 31.7 x 39.2 cm
Letter of the Yang Di Pertuan Muda of Riau with black seal, addressed to Raffles
Endorsement verso in Romanised script: ‘Rahaj Mouda / of Rio / Reed. 9 April 1811 / Requesting supplying / Purau and Boats’
Endorsement in Jawi script: ‘This letter is from the Raja Muda of Riau on the twelfth / of the month of Rabi’ul-awal’

An epistle of sincerity and straightforwardness along with varied gifts; enclosed within it uprightness and candour along with the purity of heart to which there is no limit and time so long as the heavenly sphere, the sun and the moon shall continue to revolve, from us Sri Yang Di Pertuan Muda, who owns the throne of government with all its dependencies,

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5 This is a draft copy of the English translation of the letter sent by Raffles to the Raja Muda of Riau. The present writer has not been able to locate the original Malay letter.

6 A small vessel of the perahu kind, with the oblique sail called layar tanjak. See William Marsden, A Dictionary and Grammar of the Malay Language, Vol. 1, Oxford University Press, Singapore, 1984, p. 232; see also p. 86 for a note on layar tanjak.

* A small island in the offing of Malaca [sic] where pirates were wont to be hanged in chains.

7 The Yang Dipertuan Muda [or Yam Tuan Muda] of Riau during this period was Raja Saafar, son of Raja Haji, the famous Marhum Ketapang (the one who died at Ketapang) who succeeded Yam Tuan Muda Raja Ali in 1805. The Yam Tuan
Johor and Pahang; may it be delivered by the will of God, lord of all the worlds, to the presence of our friend, His Excellency, Thomas Raffles Esquire who owns the power of jurisdiction in the eastern countries, equal to all other great rajas and who is capable of conducting wisdom and prudence towards every friend, companion and associate, especially so with every raja, merchant and the needy; and may the lord God of all the universe extend his duration of life and time.

Following that, we shall make plain to our friend that our friend’s letter has arrived safely, giving us much happiness in listening to its perfect couplets together with the gift from our friend, a telescope of European make, for which we are very grateful.

Furthermore, in our friend’s letter it is stated that ships-of-war are going to invade the land of Java. We pray to God of all the universe to grant victory over the enemies so that it will be easy for all people who are barely subsisting to pursue their livelihood.

Following that, our friend requires sampans with nets. At this time when the [Chinese] junks are coming all the [sampan pukat] have gone hither and thither. Some have gone to Kelantan and Trengganu, while others to Pahang and Bangka. There are four left behind in Riau. Following our friend’s instruction in a day or two we shall order the sampans to sail to Malacca to be delivered to our friend. We leave the payment for hiring them to our friend’s discretion.

Following that, we make it plain to our friend that regarding the subject of our friend’s request for rice, chickens, ducks and geese in Riau and other provisions, for the present they are hard [to get]. At the moment rice costs 180 ringgit per koyan at Riau.

And further, there are four sampans with nets that go to Pulau Pinang and Perak. Those too we leave to whatever is your discretion. Such is the case.

Further to that, herewith is a token of sincerity to our friend, though not as it should be, namely, a catty or two of wax and a bouquet of flowers.

Written on the twelfth of Rabi’ul-awal, on Saturday, at seven o’clock [6 April 1811 CE].

Riau 2

Warkah Yang Di Pertuan Muda Riau, satu lembar, 31.7 x 39.2 cm, dengan meterai hitam, dialamatkan kepada Raffles.

Warkat al-ikhlas wawafat al-ajnas yang dipesertakan dalamnya tulis dan ikhlas serta sucti hati yang tiada berhingga dan masa [sic]; selagi ada peredaran matahara dan bulan alai al-dawam iaitu daripada Seri Yang Di Pertuan Muda yang mempunyai takhtah kerajaan dalam negeri Riau segala dengan daerahnya; barang disampaikan Tuhan sarwa sekalian alam kairanya kehadapan majlis sahabat beta iaitu Seri Paduka Thomas Raffles Esquire yang mempunyai perintah pada masa ini di dalam daerah baladun timur yang duduk di dalam negeri Melaka yang makmur; talah yang beroleh keberesan dan kemulaian daripada Tuhan sarwa sekalian alam serta pula pandai melakukan arif bijaksananya pada segala sahabat handai taulannya istimewa pula pada segala samanya raja-raja antara sahabat bersahabat istimewa pula pada [sic] lagi dangan [sic] segala dagang dan miskin serta pula barang dipanjangkan Allah? Tuhan sarwa sekalian alam usia umur zamannya daripada hal yang dimikian itu

Waba’adah daripada itu, ehwal adalah beta membangkuan kepada sahabat beta dari warkah sahabat beta itu telah sampaih dangan [sic]

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8 The reference to Chinese junks here could possibly mean that their arrival was seasonal and their visit was primarily to collect articles for which there was a considerable market. In the early 19th century Riau was especially noted for its exports of pepper and gambier from the islands of Bintan and Batam. The presence of large numbers of Chinese settlers on both islands also contributed to the bustling nature of the trade. See John Crawfurd, A Descriptive Dictionary of the Indian Islands and Adjacent Countries, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1971, pp. 366–367; see also Begbie, Malay Peninsular, pp. 311–315.

9 Dinghy used with nets.

10 A measure of weight or capacity varying from 27 to 40 picula (generally established at around 133½ lbs).

11 A shoe-boat, dug-out or dinghy.

12 A measure of weight of about 1 1/3 pounds.

13 The year is not given. But 12 Rabi’ul-awal of 1226 corresponds with 6 April 1811, which was a Saturday.

14 The handwriting in this letter is not only atrociously bad by the Jawi standard of writing, but also inconsistent in the spelling of words, thus making it difficult to read.