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## Structure, date and sources of Hikayat Aceh revisited

### The problem of Mughal-Malay literary ties

It is common knowledge that from the early centuries AD to the nineteenth century India remained an important source of inspiration for creators of traditional Malay culture and Malay men of letters. However, if literary ties between Hindu India and the Malay world, both direct and mediated by Javanese literature, have frequently drawn the attention of researchers, creative stimuli that came to the Malays from Muslim India remain inadequately studied. Yet the role of these stimuli, radiating from major centres of the Muslim, Persianate, India such as Bengal, Gujarat, Deccan, and the Coromandel coast, in the development of Malay literary culture was by no means inferior to the inspiration originating from Hindu India. In this context, cultural and literary contacts of the Sultanate of Aceh with the Mughal Empire in the seventeenth century are a particularly interesting and challenging subject.

One of the earliest indications of cultural links between Aceh and the Mughal Empire is found in G.P. Rouffaer's article (1906) on the seal of Aceh sultans. Later, B. Schrieke (1955-57, II:251-3) cited quite a few examples of how Mughal court traditions influenced the life and customs of the court of Aceh. With reference to early Dutch sources, he enumerates Mughal parallels to the palace architecture of Aceh and the park of the Aceh sultans graced by characteristic constructions, as well as to royal processions with elephants and festive river trips, fashion in clothes, a taste for arrack, and for elephant, ram, and cock-fighting. Among other features typical of the two courts, Schrieke mentions the important function of eunuchs as intermediaries between the ruler and the outside world, the custom of kings to give audiences from a balcony or a window, and the use of similar state orchestras

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(*nobat*) stationed above the gateway of the palace. Finally, he draws attention to the Mughal origin of the titles of some Aceh officials (*karkun*, 'scribe', and *kotval*, 'chief of city guards'), of the style and form of Aceh royal letters, and (following Rouffaer) of the design of its royal seal.<sup>1</sup>

Although Andaya (2001:38) has recently shortened this list, having pointed to other possible sources of some of its entries and noting that sultans of Aceh updated their society 'in the image of their illustrious co-religionists in the Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal Timurid empires', he nevertheless reiterates that 'Aceh's strongest link to the Islamic world was through the Indian Muslim kingdoms, particularly the Mughal Timurid dynasty' (Andaya 2001:39).

Two more Aceh-Mughal parallels, important for understanding the historico-cultural background of this article, can be added to Schrieke's list. The first of them is a preponderance of Ibn al-'Arabi's *wahdat al-wujud* ('existential monism') Sufi school in the reign of the Mughal emperor Akbar (1542-1605), which, after severe criticism by Ahmad Sirhindi and his followers from the Naqshbandiyya order, temporarily gave way to domination by a more orthodox *wahdat al-shuhud* ('experimental monism') school in the reign of Akbar's grandson, Shah Jahan (1627-1658). An obvious echo of this changing religious-mystical situation in the Mughal Empire is discernible in the predominance of *wahdat al-wujud* in Aceh in the late 1630s, and its temporary retreat in the early 1640s under pressure from the orthodox criticism of Nuruddin al-Raniri, *shuhudi* in its nature, and the subsequent witch-hunt (Drewes 1986).

The second parallel is the popularity of the same literary works and genres in both the Mughal Empire and the Malay world, Aceh in particular, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Remarkably, many of them are Malay translations, or rather adaptations, of Persian texts, among others *Hikayat Amir Hamzah* (Tale of Amir Hamzah), *Hikayat Bakhtiar* (Tale of Bakhtiar), *Kalila dan Damina* (Kalila and Damina), *Hikayat bayan budiman* (Tale of the wise parrot; the Malay adaptation of the Persian *Tuti-nama*, Book of the parrot), and *Taj as-salatin* (Crown of sultans). The Amir Hamzah epic enjoyed enormous popularity under the Mughal emperors Humayun (1530-1556) and Akbar (1556-1605) (Lang and Meredith-Owens 1959:473). Around the end of the sixteenth century, on Akbar's orders, Abu'l-Fazl composed new versions of *Tuti-nama* and *Kalila wa-Dimna*. About the same time, the popular version of *Bakhtiar-nama*, the one which was translated into Malay, became known in Mughal India. *Taj as-salatin*, although based on Al-Ghazali's *Nasihah al-muluk* ('Counsel for kings'; Braginsky forthcoming), is comparable to some extent to the 'mirror' written for the Mughal emperor Jahangir (1605-1627) (Alvi

<sup>1</sup> For the most recent comprehensive study of Malay seals, including a detailed analysis of the seals of Aceh sultans and their Mughal connections, see Gallop 2002.

1989:10-1, 29-34). The son of Shah Jahan, Muhammad Dara Shikuh Qadiri, wrote another version of the *Tuti-nama*.<sup>2</sup>

These parallels are quite eloquent, but students of traditional Malay writings rarely consider the sources of these writings in the literature of Mughal India. One text said to have possible Mughal connections is *Hikayat Aceh* (Tale of Aceh). Originally edited and examined in the pioneering study by T. Iskandar (1958), it is the main subject of this article.

*Hikayat Aceh*, the panegyric chronicle of the sultan of Aceh Iskandar Muda (1607-1636), is, in many respects, quite atypical in the context of earlier historical writings in Malay, such as *Hikayat raja Pasai* (Tale of Pasai kings), *Sejarah Melayu* (Malay Annals), and *Hikayat Banjar* (Tale of Banjar).<sup>3</sup> The atypical nature of the work – primarily the fact that it eulogizes only one ruler rather than a whole dynasty, and its fairly extraordinary structure – led Iskandar (1958:22-4) to assume that *Hikayat Aceh* followed patterns of Persian historiography, namely the model of the *Akbar-nama* (H. Beveridge 1972) by Abu'l-Fazl, the panegyric chronicle of the Mughal emperor Akbar composed around 1602. Considering the noticeable influence of Mughal culture and literature on the court of Aceh, this hypothesis does not seem farfetched.

A. Johns (1979:47-60), however, disagreed with Iskandar's assumption. Having pointed to the rather simple, typically Malay stories of *Hikayat Aceh* and, in contrast, the completely different, excessively refined rhetoric of *Akbar-nama*, Johns considered the chronicle of Iskandar Muda to be a genuinely Malay composition, similar to *penglipur lara* tales. The polemics continued, and in the Malaysian edition of *Hikayat Aceh* Iskandar showed the differences between this work and narratives of *penglipur lara* (Iskandar 2001: xlviii-1) and cited a few additional arguments in favour of his hypothesis.

Nevertheless, the two viewpoints are not irreconcilable. It is difficult to deny that narratives about Iskandar Muda's exploits in *Hikayat Aceh* are similar to typically Malay stories as encountered, for instance, in *Sejarah Melayu*, and are sometimes equally expressive. At the same time, as we shall see, the panegyric chronicle *Hikayat Aceh* resembles Persian writings of this genre in its structural pattern.

The genre of panegyric chronicles (of a dynasty or an individual ruler) emerges in Persian historiography in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, after the Mongol conquest of Persian-speaking areas: Iran, Khurasan, and Mawarannahr. Its rise is closely related to a certain decline of panegyric *qasidah*, the subtleties of which were badly understood by Mongol rulers of the Persian world. The flourishing of panegyric chronicles, however,

<sup>2</sup> For more details on Malay translations from Persian (the translation of above-mentioned works in particular) and literary ties between Muslim India and the Malay world, see Marrison 1955; Brakel 1970; Guillot 2004:159, 177-86; Braginsky forthcoming.

<sup>3</sup> Jones 1999; Winstedt 1938; Ras 1968.

can be dated back to the Timurid Mughal epoch, especially to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Rypka et al. 1968:443-9; Sims 1974:9-59).

*Hikayat Aceh* is particularly similar to writings of the branch of the Persian genre that describes the reign of only one ruler in the form of either his more eulogistic official history and *zafar-nama*, 'book of victories' (for instance, *Zafar-nama-yi Timuri*, *Humayun-nama*, *Akbar-nama*<sup>4</sup>), or his more sober 'autobiography' (for example, that of Timur, Babur or Jahangir<sup>5</sup>), quite simple in its rhetoric. This kind of historiography frequently combines elements of a panegyric proper, a chronicle of events, and a heroic epic, usually with religio-mystical overtones. It is precisely this genre combined with the structure of Persian panegyric chronicle that is found in *Hikayat Aceh*, although in a somewhat incomplete form, since the Malay work describes only the childhood and the youth of Iskandar Muda, before abruptly ending.

Needless to say, only a comprehensive comparative study of *Hikayat Aceh* can explain the origin of its atypical structure. Before that, however, it seems useful to view in more detail those features of the chronicle that allow us to presume the existence of its Persian prototype of the Mughal epoch, or rather a Mughal source of inspiration that impacted on its author's work.

*Hikayat Aceh* begins with the seemingly usual Malay dynastic myth of origin: two brothers, descendants of Iskandar Zulkarnain, marry, respectively, a celestial nymph (*bidadari*) and a princess found in the hollow stem of a bamboo tree (in the chronicle this marriage is explicitly likened to the marriage of Dasarata, Sri Rama's father, and Mandudari).<sup>6</sup> Then their son and daughter also marry and give birth to a son, thus laying the foundation for the dynasty of Acehnese rulers.

However, this beginning seems usual only at first glance. Firstly, marrying the princess from the bamboo stem is explained by the statement that:

If Allah wishes to display His Mercy to a prince, [He gives him] a celestial nymph from a hollow bamboo, who is a descendant of Maha Bisnu (Sanskrit Vishnu) (Iskandar 1958:72).

No matter how strange this sentence might seem, it is a variant of the Muslim formula which accompanies descriptions of each reign in the chronicle and, in the final analysis, is a paraphrase of a *hadith* quoted in *Taj as-Salatin*.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Darby 1723; A.S. Beveridge 1902; Thackston 2004, I; H. Beveridge 1972.

<sup>5</sup> Stewart 1830; A.S. Beveridge 1921; Thackston 1993, 1999.

<sup>6</sup> Indic, or rather Hindu-Buddhist elements, relatively scarce in *Hikayat Aceh*, are beyond the scope of this study; for these elements in Acehnese culture of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Lombard 1967:134; Brakel 1979; Wessing 1988; Braginsky 2004b.

<sup>7</sup> Roorda van Eysinga 1827:224. Compare in *Taj as-salatin*: 'When Allah Most High manifests His Mercy to a nation, He makes the best among them their ruler [who is adorned with] perfect intellect and manners and appropriate qualities and actions' (Roorda van Eysinga 1827:224); or

Secondly, the prince who marries the celestial nymph persuades her to resign herself to her fate to become his wife, for their marriage was predetermined (*ditakdirkan*) by Allah from pre-eternity (*azal*). This is an obviously Sufi motif, found in particular in Ibn al-'Arabi's doctrine of Immutable Essences (*ayan sabita*). Thus, the myth of origin – designed primarily to ensure a link between the Hindu and Muslim epochs – absorbs Islamic motifs and is given an Islamic interpretation.

The mythical section is followed by a genealogy of Aceh rulers, predecessors of Sultan Iskandar Muda, which includes a summary of events during the reign of each of them. Each reign is described according to a standard scheme. The narration begins with a variation of the formula mentioned above, which usually reads as follows:

When Allah, Glorious and Most High, wishes to reveal His power and greatness to inhabitants of the world, he makes one of his chosen slaves the ruler of a certain country (Iskandar 1958:79).

Then follows the description of events and an assessment of the moral qualities of each ruler.

Without going into a detailed analysis of this part of the chronicle with its different stories of different rulers, I merely note that the cause of every event in it is invariably the Will of Allah and that it contains rather negative assessments of certain rulers. Moreover, in this part one often encounters stories about the murder of cruel and unjust sultans by courtiers (for instance, the murder of Sultan Zain al-Abidin during a Sufi *zikir*), which are absolutely atypical of the preceding historical tradition. It is noteworthy that no such murders entail punishment by the Most High; it is thus silently implied that He accepts them. Finally, each section of this genealogical part concludes with the date of the death of the sultan (which is at the same time the date of his successor's enthronement), the duration of his reign, and the concluding formula:

And Allah, Glorious and Most High, is Omniscient and [He] is the best narrator of every story (Iskandar 1958:85).

Thus, *Hikayat Aceh* is the first Malay chronicle containing dates for each reign. The narratives in its genealogical part, in spite of their similarity to stories from *Hikayat raja Pasai* and *Sejarah Melayu*, are notable for their standard structure, which meets the requirements of Muslim historiography more strictly than the above-mentioned works and is permeated to a greater degree with a Muslim ethos.

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in Persian *Siasat-nama* by Nizam al-Mulk (eleventh century): 'In every age and time God (be He exalted) chooses one member of the human race and, having adorned and endowed him with kingly virtues, entrusts him with the interests of the world and the well-being of His servants' (Darke 1960:9).

However, the mythical and genealogical sections are only a prelude, or rather a background, to the main part of the chronicle, a glorification of Iskandar Muda. Their function is not so much to describe events preceding his birth, but to demonstrate the supernatural origin of his ancestors and the purity of his genealogical tree, his likeness to great sultans of the past, and the contrast between him and previous evil or weak rulers of Aceh.

The form of the subsequent narration of Iskandar's childhood and youth is also unusual in the Malay historiographic tradition. The structural basis of this section is a list of 'annual accounts' of the prince's numerous exploits, from the age of three. For instance, at the age of seven he mastered the control of elephants; at the age of eight he arranged mock sea battles; at the age of nine he mastered the use of arms; at the age of ten he defeated the Portuguese ambassador in the art of horsemanship; at the age of twelve he killed a wild buffalo; at the age of thirteen he miraculously mastered the wisdom of the Koran and *kitab*; at the age of fourteen he killed a ferocious tiger, and so on.

Later we shall return to these 'annual accounts'; for the time being the major features that distinguish *Hikayat Aceh* from earlier Malay historical writings can be summarized as follows:

- *Hikayat Aceh* is totally focused on the reign (to be more exact, on the childhood and youth) of only one ruler, Sultan Iskandar Muda;
- *Hikayat Aceh* is more deeply Islamized than other Malay chronicles and is structured by a set of Islamic formulas;
- *Hikayat Aceh* contains dates and duration of each reign mentioned.

It is precisely these features atypical of the earlier chronicles that point to external sources of inspiration influencing the author of *Hikayat Aceh*.

Now, to check Iskandar's hypothesis, I compare the description of Sultan Iskandar Muda's reign in *Hikayat Aceh* with its counterparts in Timurid Mughal panegyric chronicles.<sup>8</sup> For this comparison two quite characteristic specimens have been chosen: the above-mentioned *Akbar-nama* by Abu'l Fazl and *Malfuzat-i Timuri*, 'Autobiography of Timur [Tamerlane]' (Stewart 1830), by Abu Talib al-Husayni, which was presented to the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan (1628-1658).

The main common structural elements (motifs) of these writings are shown in the accompanying table: '+' indicates the presence of a particular motif in a given work, '-' its absence, '+-' points to a similar though not exactly matching motif (in which case the absent feature of the motif is italicized). A more detailed comparison can be found in the Appendix.

<sup>8</sup> The bibliography of studies on Mughal historiography is extensive, see, for instance, Mohibul Hasan 1968; Rizvi 1975; Mukhia 1976; Gupta 1989; the articles by Tripathi and Richards, included in the collection edited by Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (2000), are also of interest for the topics discussed in this article. Unfortunately, structural patterns of Mughal historical writings are virtually untouched in all of these studies.

Table 1. Structural elements of *Hikayat Aceh*, *Malfuzat-i Timuri* and *Akbar-nama*

Structural elements (motifs)	<i>Hikayat Aceh</i>	<i>Malfuzat-i Timuri</i>	<i>Akbar-nama</i>
1. 'Luminous' prophetic dreams about the birth of the future 'ruler of the world'	+	+	
2. Other dreams and miracles alluding to the future greatness of the prince <i>and the territory under his sway</i> .	+	+	+ -
3. The meaningful (auspicious) name of the prince	+	+	+
4. A brief chronicle of the reign of the prince's predecessors	+	+	+
5. Annual accounts of the prince's maturing and his exploits	+	+	-
6. The prince's passion for <i>military games</i> and hunting, starting at an early age	+	+	+ -
7. The prince's supernatural abilities in studying the Koran and other subjects. <sup>1</sup>	+	+	+
8. The prince reveals his sublime spiritual qualities and the divine mandate for a great kingdom; ' <i>ulama, sayyid and Sufis, who know that he is chosen by God, give him their support and blessings</i> .' <sup>2</sup>	+	+	+ -

<sup>1</sup> With regard to Akbar's literacy, see however note 21.

<sup>2</sup> On the religio-mystical foundation of Timur's and Timurids' (including Mughals') conception of kingship, see Tripathi 2000. Similar conceptions, well known in both pre-Islamic and Islamic Sumatra, but probably enhanced by Mughal influence, were influential in Aceh in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, particularly in the reigns of Alauddin Riayat Syah and Iskandar Muda (see Milner 1983; Ito Takeshi 1984:249, 257-8; Braginsky 2004a:326; Hadi 2004:63-4).

The comparison shows that, although the three chronicles largely follow a similar pattern, *Hikayat Aceh* is considerably closer to Timur's 'Autobiography' than to *Akbar-nama*, which lacks counterparts to at least three essential features of *Hikayat Aceh* and *Malfuzat-i Timuri* (see items 2, 6, 8 of the table). On the other hand, in both *Malfuzat-i Timuri* and *Hikayat Aceh* the figure of a great conqueror, *jahangir* in Persian, stands at the centre of the narrative. In both chronicles, holy men and the parents of the hero see prophetic, 'luminous' dreams,<sup>9</sup> which symbolically outline the future territory under the hero's sway. In both chronicles, from early childhood the hero prefers war games to all other kinds of entertainment and, having divided his playmates into two

<sup>9</sup> On the philosophy and symbolism of the divine mystical light, which played an important role in the ideology and historiography of the Mughal Timurid dynasty, see Richards 2000:147-50. This mysticism of light is not unlike what we find in *Hikayat Aceh*, even if the latter is less refined.

groups, arranges mock battles of various sorts. In both chronicles he shows particular respect to *'ulama, sayyid* and Sufis, who at once guess his future greatness and whose blessing and guidance are crucial for the fulfilling of his mission. And – most important – in both works, the authors consistently use the form of an 'annual account' of the hero's exploits throughout the text, beginning at seven years of age in the case of Timur and at three years of age in the case of Iskandar Muda.

This form is unique in Malay historical literature and in Mughal historiography as well. Although some Mughal works (for instance, *Akbar-nama* and the 'Autobiography' of Emperor Jahangir) contain reports about each reigning year of the emperor, they do not include annual accounts of their lives before enthronement, that is in their childhood and youth. Interestingly, the annual account seems to be considered by Abu Talib al-Husayni himself as the main structural principle of Timur's 'Autobiography'. As he writes in his preamble, the events of Timur's life are recorded in the book 'from his seventh to his seventieth year' (Rieu 1879-83, I:178).

The coincidence of the above combination of motifs allows us, although we must proceed with due caution, to advance the hypothesis that the author of *Hikayat Aceh* may have followed the pattern of Timur's 'Autobiography', introducing, at the same time, typically Malay stories, including the Malay myth of origin of the ruling dynasty. In addition, the rhetoric of *Malfuzat-i Timuri* lacks the refinement and grandiloquent metaphorical style of *Akbar-nama*, thus standing much closer to the usual Malay narrative manner. It is precisely Persian works of this simpler style that normally served as a source of inspiration for traditional Malay authors and translators (see Braginsky forthcoming).

However, how could the author of *Hikayat Aceh* be acquainted with *Malfuzat-i Timuri*, given that specialists in Persian literature (for instance, Storey 1970, I-1:792) usually date it at 1637, the year in which the book was supposedly presented to Shah Jahan, whereas *Hikayat Aceh* is believed to have been composed during the reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda, who died in 1636 (see Van der Linden 1937:47; Iskandar 1958:17)?

There are two possible answers to this question. The first answer is that, even if *Hikayat Aceh* was actually written during the reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda, as T. Iskandar and a number of other scholars believe, the Sultan's chronicler may nonetheless have been familiar with Timur's 'Autobiography' and used it as his model. The point is that 1637 as the year of composition of *Malfuzat-i Timuri* is subject to doubt, and the problem of the dating of this work is more complicated than it may seem at first sight.

As far as one can judge from the data in Rieu's catalogue of Persian manuscripts in the British Museum, there are two versions of *Malfuzat-i Timuri*. The first of them is the 'unedited version' by Abu Talib al-Husayni. He informs the

reader that he found Timur's 'Autobiography' written in the Turki language 'in the Holy Places (Mecca and Medina), in the library of Ja'far-pasha, the ruler of Yemen' (1608-1616, see Ansaldi 1933:155) and translated it into Persian, so that it 'served as a guide to kings'. Neither the date of translation nor the fact of its being presented to Shah Jahan are mentioned in Abu Talib's preamble. Rieu (1879-83, I:177-80) describes several manuscripts of this version.

The second, 'amended' version, which is represented in the catalogue of Rieu (1879-83, I:179) by one manuscript, is the one edited by a certain Muhammad Afzal Bukhari in 1637 on the orders of Shah Jahan. Muhammad Afzal states that the book was presented to Shah Jahan, but does not specify when exactly that took place (Shah Jahan ruled from 1628 to 1658). Therefore, 1637 is neither the date of the translation nor the date of its presentation to Shah Jahan, but merely the year in which the emperor commissioned the editing of the book. Needless to say, the 'unedited version' could have appeared well before 1637 and have been presented to Shah Jahan any time between 1628 and 1637. Besides, in his preamble, Muhammad Afzal makes a noteworthy remark indicating that Abu Talib began to translate Timur's 'Autobiography' into Persian immediately after he found it (Rieu 1879-83, I:179). Thus, even if the 'unedited version' was finished as late as the 1620s, it may have been known to the chronicler of Iskandar Muda.

A number of scholars (Rieu 1879-83, I:178; H. Beveridge 1921) have expressed doubts about the existence of a Turkic prototype of *Malfuzat-i Timuri* and have suggested that this work may have been composed by Abu Talib himself, who referred to that prototype only to add authority to his fictitious Timur's 'Autobiography'. Their assertions cannot be said to have been proven 'beyond reasonable doubt'.<sup>10</sup> However, even if they are correct,

<sup>10</sup> Remarkably, in his fairly recent paper the eminent Indian historian Irfan Habib cites convincing arguments – based on the earlier ignored sources and the study of the entire textual tradition of *Malfuzat-i Timuri* including its Indian manuscripts – in favour of both the existence of the Turkic prototype of this work (although composed not by Timur, but 'soon after Timur's death') and the authenticity of the early version of its Persian translation by Abu Talib. Irfan Habib also distinguishes between two versions of Abu Talib's *Malfuzat-i Timuri*: the 'original version' (A) and its 'doctored version' (B) (see in this article, above). Proceeding from this, he explains scholars' doubts by the fact that they, Storey in particular, simply ignored these differences (Habib 1997:305-9). Quite important for us is also Habib's remark that, in contrast to his father Jahangir, it was precisely Shah Jahan who particularly encouraged the cult of Timur (Richards 2000:145). In 1628, soon after his coronation, Shah Jahan assumed the title of Sahib-i Qiran-i Sani (Second Lord of Constellations), of which Timur was the first bearer. He compared himself (or rather was compared by his historians) both to Prince Timur before his accession and to Timur the Conqueror at different stages of his own conquests. Finally, Shah Jahan's historians did not trace his ancestry beyond Timur, thus departing from the tradition established by Akbar (Habib 1997:303-5; on that tradition, see Richards 2000:143-5). Could it be that Abu Talib presented his work in its original version to Shah Jahan in connection with his assumption of Timur's title Sahib-i Qiran in 1628 and that the emperor turned to this work again in 1637, when he decided 'to pursue a more energetic course', that is the Timur-like annexationist policy (its first fruit was the recapturing

it is not quite clear how this would affect the pre-1637 dating of the work. If its Yemen connections were conjured up by Abu Talib, and he composed *Malfuzat-i Timuri* sometime after the 1620s, why did he not 'find' its Turkic prototype in the library of one of the successors of Ja'far-pasha, whose rule in Yemen came to an end only in 1636 (Smith 2002:273)?

The second answer to the question posed above, the more probable answer, is that, if *Malfuzat-i Timuri* was actually written around 1637, the author of *Hikayat Aceh* might have been familiar with it because he composed his chronicle after Sultan Iskandar Muda's death in 1636, not during his lifetime. The point is that the exact date of *Hikayat Aceh* is still unknown. Arguments of Van der Linden (1937:47) and T. Iskandar (1958:17) do not convincingly demonstrate that the *hikayat* was composed during the lifetime of Iskandar Muda, but only that it could not have been composed before his ascension to the throne in 1607.<sup>11</sup> However, panegyric chronicles were composed both during the reign of a particular sultan as well as after his death, on the orders of his successors (for example, it is precisely for them that Timur's chronicles were written). What can be stated with certainty is only the fact that *Hikayat Aceh* appeared between 1607, when Iskandar Muda ascended the throne, and the late seventeenth century, when the chronicle was used by missionary-lexicographer Leydekker and probably mentioned in the list of Saint Martin's manuscripts (Iskandar 1958:2-5).

Yet this period can be considerably shortened. In *Hikayat Aceh* we find the prophecy of Iskandar Muda's grandfather Sultan Alauddin Sayyid al-Mukammil about the future exploits of his grandson, and it is no secret that prophecies of this kind were normally made *post factum*. According to Sultan Alauddin, Iskandar Muda would conquer Deli, Johor, and all Malay sultanates, and would subdue all the Malay rulers who showed disobedience to Aceh.<sup>12</sup> The last Malay sultanate conquered by Iskandar Muda was Kedah, annexed in 1619-1620. If the phrase about disobedient rulers refers to uprisings in the vassal sultanates, then the uprisings in Pahang were put down in 1630-1631 and 1635-1636 (Lombard 1967:94). Thus, if the *hikayat* was written between the 1630s and the 1680-1690s, its author's familiarity with *Malfuzat-i Timuri* seems even more plausible.

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of Qandahar from the Safavids in 1638)? However, in the early 1650s when this policy failed, 'Timur's appeal was [...] largely over', and since then 'the legacy of Timur's name no longer had any role to play in the formulation of specific strategic designs of the Mughal Empire' (Habib 1997:304-5).

<sup>11</sup> Such is, for instance, T. Iskandar's argument (1958:17) that in *Hikayat Aceh* Sultan Iskandar Muda's mother bears the title of Paduka Syah Alam, which is indicative of her being the mother of the ruling monarch.

<sup>12</sup> Iskandar 1958:153. [...] *mengalahkan Deli [...] dan berhamba raja Johor [dan] segala raja-raja Melayu dan [menga]lahkan segala raja-raja yang tiada mau takluk pada Aceh* (Iskandar 1958:153).

T. Iskandar's assumption (2001:xlvi-liv) that *Hikayat Aceh* was probably written by a famous Sufi sheikh of Aceh, Syamsuddin of Pasai,<sup>13</sup> may, if duly substantiated, become a strong argument in favour of the chronicle having been composed during Iskandar Muda's lifetime. However, the pieces of evidence cited by Teuku Iskandar to prove his hypothesis do not seem sound enough.<sup>14</sup> For example, in spite of all T. Iskandar's explanations, it is really difficult to imagine this well-educated 'alim, the author of the orthodox Muslim catechism *Mir'at al-mu'minin* ('Mirror of the faithful', Van Nieuwenhuijze 1945), writing that 'If Allah wishes to display His Mercy to a prince, [He gives him] a celestial nymph from a hollow bamboo, who is a descendant of Maha Bisnu' (Iskandar 1958:72).

It is even more difficult to believe that Syamsuddin – an adviser to Sultans Alauddin and Iskandar Muda who was deeply involved in Aceh's international relations<sup>15</sup> – could have written the completely fictitious story in *Hikayat Aceh* about two allegedly Portuguese men (in fact Englishmen), Davis and Tumis (Tomkins). According to this story, they brought valuable horses to Sultan Alauddin and, on behalf of the Portuguese king, asked permission to establish a trading station in Aceh (Iskandar 1958:136-43). It

<sup>13</sup> For Syamsuddin of Pasai's (Syamsuddin al-Samatrani's) life and works, which are still inadequately studied, see Van Nieuwenhuijze 1945; Voorhoeve 1952:207; Shaghir Abdullah 1991:29-38; Van Bruinessen 1995:191; Johns 1997:296; Riddell 2001:110-6; Azra 2004:52-4; Braginsky 2004a:642-5.

<sup>14</sup> Attribution of authorship on the basis of comparative stylistic analysis often proves helpful in similar situations. However, a comparison of the Arabicized, learned style of Syamsuddin's *kitab* with the sometimes anecdotal, popular epic style of *Hikayat Aceh* is virtually useless for the solution of this problem.

<sup>15</sup> The high position occupied by Syamsuddin of Pasai at the Aceh court was first noted by Snouck Hurgronje (1906, I:96-7) and discussed in more detail by Schrieke between 1942-1945 in his unfinished book *Vorst en rijk op oud-Java*, which was not published in English until 1957. In this discussion, Schrieke identified Syamsuddin with the 'Archbishop' in John Davis's travelogue, the 'cheek' (sheikh) who was 'the chief councillor of the king' in F. de Houtman's memoirs, and the 'Bishop' in James Lancaster's description of his voyages (Schrieke 1957, II:393). Schrieke's reference (1957, II:393) to the latter was, however, somewhat misleading, as he wrote: 'Archbishop [the *qadi*: cf. James Lancaster...]' Yet, judging by all the evidence, Syamsuddin was not the *qadi* of Aceh, and Lancaster did not state that the person in which Syamsuddin can be recognized was the *qadi*. Later, the same 'who's who' problem was also touched upon by Van Nieuwenhuijze (1945:17-9), Al-Attas (1966:8-9) and Brakel (1969:210). The most detailed and convincing study of Syamsuddin's positions during the reigns of Sultans Alauddin Riayat Syah and Iskandar Muda was carried out by Ito Takeshi (1984:248-62). A comparison of the data from *Hikayat Aceh*, *Adat Aceh* ('Customs of Aceh'; Drewes and Voorhoeve 1958) and *Bustan as-salatin* ('Garden of sultans'; Iskandar 1966) with the notes of European travellers of the late sixteenth to the first third of the seventeenth century, brought him to the conclusion that Syamsuddin was the Syaikh al-Islam of Aceh, 'who as the spiritual master of the sovereign' was 'an indispensable officiant at court on the occasions of both religious and court rituals. In addition to this, his involvement in orienting Aceh's foreign relations can be regarded as another of his significant roles' (Takeshi 1984:252). Ito Takeshi's materials, findings, and conclusions are reproduced in the recent book by Amirul Hadi (2004:148-61), although he is rather economical with references.

seems highly unlikely that Syamsuddin could have been unaware of Sultan Alauddin's conversation with Davis, when the Sultan had specially and repeatedly inquired whether Davis was an Englishman and questioned him about England and its queen. In addition, Syamsuddin possibly met Davis in person and most probably talked to one of the Houtman brothers, on whose ship Davis served as a pilot (Markham 1880:141-3, 151; Reid 1995:49). Thus, Syamsuddin, who knew only too well that neither Davis nor Houtman were Portuguese and that they never presented horses to the Sultan, is quite unlikely to have been the author of this story.

Equally unlikely is that the Turkish episode of *Hikayat Aceh* (Iskandar 1958:161-8), entirely unreliable historically, could have flowed from Syamsuddin's pen. That quite remarkable episode tells of Muhammad – the Sultan of Rum, that is, the Ottoman empire – who falls seriously ill and sends two envoys to Aceh, to ask Iskandar Muda for the only medicine that can cure him. The envoys arrive in Yemen, the ruler (pasha) of which, Mansur Halab, makes arrangements for their sailing to Aceh. As Iskandar Muda is engaged in the war against Deli at the time, the envoys have to wait for his return to the capital city. Having conquered Deli, Iskandar Muda returns and holds a magnificent reception for the envoys. On receiving the medicine, they return to Turkey and describe to Sultan Muhammad the splendour of Aceh and the greatness of its king. The Sultan says that in days of yore Allah gave the world two most powerful rulers: the Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) and Iskandar Zulkarnain (Alexander the Great). Now, by His Will, there are two most powerful rulers in the world again: he, Sultan Muhammad, in the west and Sultan Iskandar Muda in the east. It is precisely they who have firmly established the religion of Allah and His Prophet on earth. Princes (*raja-raja*), viziers, and pashas of the Arabs, Persians, Ajams and Mughals, who are present at the Sultan's audience, hear his words, and the name of Iskandar Muda becomes famous in the whole world.

On performing *hajj*, the pasha of Yemen has a conversation with 'the greatest *'ulama* of his time', Sheikh Sibghatullah and Sheikh Muhammad Mukarram, as well as with a certain Sufi, Ja'far, in the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina. At that time merchants from Aceh, Haji Ahmad and Haji Abdullah, are present in the mosque. Having learnt that they have just come from Aceh, Sheikh Sibghatullah asks them to tell about their country. The merchants most probably tell something similar to the story of the envoys. At least the pasha of Yemen confirms that they are telling the truth, since he has already heard this in the palace of the Sultan of Turkey. Fascinated by the story, the sheikhs read *Fatiha* for the benefit of Iskandar Muda. The Aceh merchants return home and report to Sheikh Syamsuddin what happened in the mosque. The Sufi Ja'far, who has also arrived in Aceh, confirms that their story is accurate.

This episode of *Hikayat Aceh*, most flattering to Iskandar Muda, is multi-

layered. It is likely that what forms its deepest layer are reminiscences of how the Sultan of Aceh Allaudin Riayat Syah al-Kahhar (1539-1571) turned to the Sultan of Turkey Selim II in search of military assistance against the Portuguese. This event is historically true and is confirmed by Turkish sources, in particular by a number of letters dated between 1567 and 1568. Envoys of the Sultan of Aceh spent two years in Istanbul, waiting for Sulaiman-pasha, the commander-in-chief of Turkish forces fighting the Portuguese. After his return, the Sultan received the envoys and sent a fleet to help the Acehnese. However, the fleet did not arrive in Aceh, as it was diverted to Yemen to put down an uprising that had broken out there. Nonetheless, Turkish cannons and gunsmiths were brought to Aceh (Reid 1969:401, 404-5, 412-3). In the Turkish episode of *Hikayat Aceh* the entire situation is 'panegyrically reversed'. It is the Turkish Sultan himself who in the moment of deadly danger turns for help to Iskandar Muda. It is the Turkish, not the Acehnese, envoys who have to wait for quite a long time before the Sultan receives them. And it is from Aceh, not from Turkey, that the sought-for object (although a medicine, not cannons) is brought in the end.

Apart from the first layer, which is an echo of the events of the 1560s, two later chronological layers can be revealed in the Turkish episode. Among the characters of the first of them, which in the chronicle is dated back to the times of Sultan Alauddin Sayyid al-Mukammil, we meet the Turkish Sultan Muhammad and Sheikh Sibghatullah. The former is undoubtedly Sultan Mehmet III, who reigned from 1595 to 1603.<sup>16</sup> The latter is Sibghatullah ibn Ruh'ullah (died in 1606 or in 1607), 'a greatest *'alim* of his time' indeed. He was a sheikh of the Shattariyya order and a 'schoolmate' of Fazlullah al-Burhanpuri (the Sufi master, *pir*, of both was Sheikh Wajihuddin), who in turn was most probably the tutor of Syamsuddin of Pasai. Although Sibghatullah spent most of his life in India, he maintained close relations with the Turkish court and from 1605 until his death lived in Medina (Rizvi 1983, II:329-31; Van Bruinessen 1995:84-5, 191). The second of these later layers is the time of Iskandar Muda's war against Deli, that is 1612.

In the Turkish episode, historical figures of these two layers are mixed up and reported synchronously. Besides, the governor (pasha) of Yemen who ruled in 1612, when Iskandar Muda waged the war with Deli, is named Mansur Hallab in the episode, whereas, in fact, Ja'far-pasha reigned in Yemen at that time, more specifically from 1608 to 1616. There is no pasha named Mansur in the history of Yemen in the Turkish period (Ansaldi 1933:151-6). It is, therefore, not unlikely that the author of *Hikayat Aceh* confused Ja'far-pasha with another figure of Yemen history of that time, Mansur Bi'llah, who

<sup>16</sup> Bosworth 1996:239. Sultan Mehmet II ruled in 1444-1446 and 1451-1481, and Sultan Mehmet IV in 1648-1687, see Bosworth 1996:239-40.

was the first imam of the Qasimi dynasty and who from 1597 until his death in 1620 struggled against the Turkish power over Yemen and bearers of this power, primarily Ja'far-pasha (Blackburn 1991:436-7).

Interestingly, although the name Ja'far-pasha does not occur in the Turkish episode, we encounter a certain Ja'far in it, who appears only to confirm the conversation in the Mosque of the Prophet. Is it one more confusion in this episode, which is so rich in confusions? Finally, the identity of one other participant in the conversation remains unclear, Sheikh Muhammad Mukarram. Could this be Muhammad ibn Mukarram (1233-1311 or 1312), the author of *Lisan al-'Arab*, one of the most famous Arabic dictionaries (Fück 1971:864)? Having nothing to do with the episode in question, he may have been known in Aceh because of this dictionary.

The confusion of characters belonging to different 'temporal layers' in *Hikayat Aceh* is so typical of Malay historiography that it will hardly surprise a Malayist. It is surprising, however, if we believe Syamsuddin of Pasai – a well-educated 'alim and a political counsellor of both Sultan Alauddin and Iskandar Muda – to be its author. In addition, like the majority of eminent Sufis of Aceh, Syamsuddin not only most probably visited the Near East in person, but also maintained close ties with Mecca and Medina (Van Nieuwenhuijze 1945:14-22). It is difficult to believe that Syamsuddin did not know that by 1612 the Sultan Mehmet III – the suzerain of the holy cities – had already been dead for nine years, and that Sibghatullah – one of the most prominent sheikhs of Medina and a 'schoolmate' of Syamsuddin's tutor – had died six years previously.

All this contradicts Teuku Iskandar's assumption that Syamsuddin of Pasai was the author of *Hikayat Aceh*, which is the main argument in favour of the chronicle having been written during the lifetime of Iskandar Muda. It is more likely therefore that the chronicle appeared after the death of the Sultan-Conqueror, when his favourite daughter, the Sultanah of Aceh Safiatuddin Taj al-Alam (1641-1675), seems to have taken special efforts to glorify her father's name. This finds confirmation in the report of Pieter Sourij, the Dutch envoy at the court of Aceh, who in July 1642 was invited to a royal banquet arranged by Taj al-Alam at Mata Ië, on the banks of the Krueng Daroy river:

Among the entertainment was 'a song of praise' [...] for the Queen's father, Sultan Iskandar Muda. This brought tears to the eyes of many Acehnese, since 'although dreaded in his life, he has however left for good among the Acehnese nation an immortal name. (Reid 1989:40-1.)

Another confirmation of the same tendency, characteristic of Taj al-Alam's reign, is the strong emphasis that the Sultanah put on her particular, Dar al-Kamal, line of ancestors, in which she includes Sultan Iskandar Muda, who

in fact belonged to both Dar al-Kamal and Mahkota Alam branches of the Aceh dynasty. This characteristic emphasis obvious from specific features of her seal (Gallop 2002:112) is somewhat reminiscent of Shah Jahan's stress on his ancestry beginning from Timur, in contrast to the earlier Mughal genealogical tradition, which started from Timur's distant predecessors (see note 10). Finally, also roughly at that time, a cycle of legends began to form around Sultan Iskandar Muda. This process culminated in the creation of *Hikayat Meukuta Alam* (or *Hikayat Malem Dagang*), the written Acehnese epic of the second half of the seventeenth century, in which Iskandar Muda played a major role.<sup>17</sup> These facts, indicative of the endeavour to eulogize Iskandar Muda, allow us to wonder whether 'a song of praise' performed at Taj al-Alam's banquet was one of those songs praising her father's military exploits which admiral Beaulieu had heard in Aceh in 1621 (Lombard 1967:142), or a piece from an early version of *Hikayat Meukota Alam*, or even a panegyric somehow related to *Hikayat Aceh*.

No matter what that song actually was, it is clear that the time of Taj al-Alam's reign was favourable for the composition of a panegyric chronicle of Sultan Iskandar Muda. Moreover, Taj al-Alam, the first woman on the Aceh throne, was badly in need of a great and glorious ancestor to enhance her right to it. Therefore, it does not seem too far-fetched to assume that *Hikayat Aceh* was written on the orders of Taj al-Alam, by an anonymous Acehnese author (this is clear from quite a few Acehnisms in the text, see Iskandar 1958:15-6) who was familiar with patterns of Timurid Mughal, Persian-language historiography.

Concluding, I would like to draw attention to one more remarkable coincidence between *Hikayat Aceh* and *Malfuzat-i Timuri*. The doubts of some scholars about the authenticity of Timur's 'Autobiography' were occasioned partly by 'the suspicious vagueness of the account of the alleged discovery [of this work]', as Rieu (1879-83, I:178) puts it. Indeed, it is difficult to understand why Abu Talib al-Husayni wrote that he had found *Malfuzat-i Timuri* in the Yemen ruler's library 'in the Holy Places' (that is, either in Mecca or in Medina) and not in Yemen itself. Incidentally, since Muhammad Afzal Bukhari, who produced the 'amended version' of the book, did not understand how this could happen either, he decided to amend Abu Talib's account in this passage too. In his version, Abu Talib saw *Malfuzat-i Timuri* in the ruler's library in Yemen (Rieu 1879-83, I:179).

It is noteworthy, however, that in the earlier part of the 'Turkish episode' of *Hikayat Aceh* the sultan's envoys arrive in Yemen and meet its ruler, while in the later part the ruler of Yemen discusses the greatness of Iskandar Muda with 'ulama in Medina. Again, it is not clear why the author of *Hikayat Aceh*

<sup>17</sup> Drewes 1979:7. For editions and studies of this Acehnese epic, see Cowan 1937; Imran 1991.

had none other than the ruler of Yemen participate in the apparently fictitious Medina discussion. Could it be because of remembering the preamble to *Malfuzat-i Timuri* that he had read some time ago, since it is precisely there that the ruler of Yemen is related to both Yemen and Medina? Moreover, from the following lines of the preamble we learn that Abu Talib translated Timur's 'Autobiography' into Persian, so that it would 'serve as a guide for kings', while the topics which, according to *Hikayat Aceh*, were discussed first at the court of the Turkish sultan and later in Medina were quite typical for such guides. Among these topics we find the greatness of the king, his striving for the status of universal ruler, the support given by Sufis to the king whose goal is to establish firmly the religion of Islam in the world, the importance of Sufis' prayers and mentions of the king's name in *khutba* for the fulfilment of his mission, and so on (Iskandar 1958:167-8).

Adding to all this the use of the annual account as the principal device of structuring the narrative in *Hikayat Aceh*, we find in this panegyric chronicle of Iskandar Muda, atypical of traditional Malay historiography, a reflection of all the components of the preamble to *Malfuzat-i Timuri*. These are: the ruler of Yemen associated with both Yemen and Holy Places (Medina in particular) in whose library the book was found, the function of the book as a guide for kings (with its central idea of the unity of universal rulership and Islam<sup>18</sup>) and the 'annual account' as the means of arranging the narrative.

<sup>18</sup> This idea played an equally important role in *Taj as-Salatin*, which was composed in Aceh in 1603 and included a story on the Mughal emperor Humayun (Roorda van Eysinga 1827:149), and in Mughal edifying 'mirrors for kings' (Alvi 1989:13-5). Remarkably, among Malay edifying compositions, we find *Hikayat Sultan Mogul mengajarkan anaknya* (Tale of how a Mughal sultan instructed his son; see Tol and Witkam 1993), which, even if it has little to do with genuine Mughal didactic literature, testifies to the fact that Mughal or pseudo-Mughal 'mirrors' were considered authoritative in the Malay world.

## Appendix

The principal motifs (structural components) in the description of the childhood and youth of the prince in *Hikayat Aceh*, *Malfuzat-i Timuri* and *Akbar-nama*

<i>Hikayat Aceh</i> (Iskandar 1958)	<i>Malfuzat-i Timuri</i> (Stewart 1830)	<i>Akbar-nama</i> (H. Beveridge 1972)
1 Luminous prophetic dreams and signs of the prince's future greatness		
<p>a. <i>Faqih</i> Khoja Manassih, the tutor of Iskandar's father, notices that a radiance emanates from his student's face and lights up his chest; this is a sign that his student's son will become the greatest ruler of Aceh (p. 115).</p> <p>b. While pregnant with Iskandar, his mother sees three dreams: in the first of them her hairpin is the moon, and her shawl is a myriad of stars, in the second she sees that a radiance of the size of a sponge crowns her head, in the third all her body is surrounded with a radiance that illuminates the whole palace and eclipses the light of all the lamps; Iskandar's grandfather interprets these dreams as a sign of his grandson's future greatness (pp. 115-6).</p>	<p>Taragay, Timur's father, sees in his dream a handsome youth who gives him a shining sword, a radiance from the sword lights up the whole world; the Sufi saint <i>Sayyid Kelal</i> interprets this dream as a prophecy that a son will be born to Taragay, who will conquer the whole world and will spread Islam everywhere. Another version of this dream is also mentioned: a radiance from the sword illuminates the whole world, and mist rises from Taragay's hands, the mist condenses and bursts into rain; this is interpreted as a prediction that Taragay's son will conquer the entire world and his descendants will be kings (p. 85).</p>	<p>a. Akbar's father, Humayun, sees in his dream that God bestows upon him a splendid heir, from whose forelock and brow the light of greatness and magnificence emanates (p. 42).</p> <p>b. A light so bright that no one can look at it emanates from the forehead of Akbar's mother, when she is pregnant with him (pp. 43-5).</p> <p>c. In his dream Humayun sees a very bright star rising in the sky, the radiance of the star illuminates most of the world; a holy man who interprets the dream says that this is the star of his heir and that he will rule over the part of the world illuminated by it. He also says that a similar star came out of the breast of Kachuli Bahadur, heralding the birth of Timur and his conquest of the world (p. 47).</p>
2 Other prophetic dreams and miracles that predict the future greatness of the prince and the vast territory over which he will rule		
<p>Iskandar's father Mansur has a dream in which he urinates from the top of a fortress, his urine spreads around like a sea that floods the whole of Aceh and joins with the ocean. Mansur's tutor explains that a son will be born to Mansur, who will conquer countries of East and West (pp. 113-4).</p>	<p>Timur dreams that he throws a large net into the sea and drags to the shore all the fish and aquatic animals living in it; the dream predicts that in the future he will conquer the world and subjugate all its inhabitants (p. 13).</p>	

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### 3 A meaningful, auspicious name chosen for the prince

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When Iskandar reaches the age of three, Sultan Alauddin changes his earlier name to Munawwar ('Shining') in honour of Iskandar's ancestor who originated from a heavenly nymph and was a descendant of Iskandar Zulkarnain; Iskandar receives this name as God's chosen one and a 'possessor of happiness' (p. 21).

Taragay brings newborn Timur to Sheikh Shamsuddin, who at that time is absorbed in reading the Koran; since they find the word tamurru ('shake [about the earth]') in the ayat which the sheikh has just read (Koran 17:16), the infant is named Timur (p. 21).

Humayun names his newborn son Akbar; this name comes from the highest heaven, the realm of light; the numerical value of this name coincides with that of the word for Sun; this name includes symbolically all the elements (earth, water, air and fire) and, from the point of view of astrology, predicts that the one who bears it will defeat all his enemies (pp. 64-8).

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### 4 A description of the reigns of the prince's predecessors

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Hikayat Aceh includes a brief chronicle of the reign of Aceh sultans from Inayat Syah and Muzaffar Syah to Alauddin Riayat Syah (pp. 72-99); after that (up to the end of the preserved fragment of the work) there follows a description of the reign of Alauddin Riayat Syah; the childhood and the youth of Iskandar Muda are portrayed in the context of this description until the moment when Alauddin proclaims Iskandar as his heir (p. 185).

Taragay narrates the genealogy of his ancestors (from Japheth to his father) to Timur, adding to it brief remarks on their conversion to Islam as well as various admonitions (pp. 22-4, and again pp. 27-9).

Akbar-nama contains a chronicle of events from Adam to Humayun, with a more detailed exposition of Timur's and Babur's reigns and a particularly extensive description of the reign of Humayun; the childhood and the youth of Akbar are portrayed in the context of this description.

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### 5 Annual accounts of the prince's maturing into an adult and of his exploits

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This literary device runs through the entire narrative, beginning with the prince at three years old.

This literary device runs through the entire narrative, beginning with the prince at seven years old.

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### 6 The prince's early passion for military games

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a. At the age of five, Iskandar divides his playmates into two units and stages military games on the river (pp. 121-4).

b. At the age of eight he arranges a mock battle in boats (pp. 130-3).

c. At the age of nine he builds two fortresses, appoints himself and one of his friends as commanders, and stages a battle between his army and the 'enemy's' army, in which they use elephants and horses and storm the 'enemy's fortress' (pp. 133-6).

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At the age of nine, war is Timur's favourite game; he divides boys of his age into two units and stages battles between them; he proclaims himself their commander and, sitting on top of the hill, sends reinforcements to the weaker side (p. 21).

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 7 The prince's mastery of riding and hunting
 

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a. At the age of ten, Iskandar competes with two Portuguese envoys in horse-racing and wins a brilliant victory (pp. 136-3).

b. At the age of seven, he catches his first wild elephant (pp. 128-9).

c. At the age of 12 he kills a wild buffalo, which even an experienced hunter fails to kill (pp. 146-9).

d. At the age of 14 he takes part in a great elephant hunt and kills a tiger (pp. 153-8).

a. When Timur is 15, he conceives a liking for hunting on horseback and succeeds in this art brilliantly (p. 88).

b. At the age of 18, chasing a wild she-goat on horseback, Timur manages to jump over a deadly dangerous ravine, which no one could do before him (pp. 25-6).

a. When Akbar is ten, he is fond of horses and hunting for stags with hounds and shows a great skill in this sport (pp. 590-1).

b. When Akbar is about 13, a hunting cheetah is given to him; he likes the cheetah very much and goes hunting with it frequently (pp. 629-30).

c. At the time of one of Humayun's military campaigns, Akbar kills a nilgao (antelope) with a single stroke of his sword, which greatly astonishes all the experienced hunters who accompany him (p. 634).

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 8 The prince learns the Koran and sciences, revealing his extraordinary abilities
 

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When Iskandar is 13, his grandfather gives him a golden writing tablet and sends him to study with *faqih* Raja Indra. Thanks to the Prophet Muhammad's miraculous succour, Iskandar learns all the subjects that he is taught in a few months: he learns to read the Koran and religious works and becomes an *alim* ('specialist in religious lore'). All the pundits and syarif say in amazement that even children of mufti of Mecca and Medina cannot achieve such results so quickly (pp. 149-50).

When Timur is seven, he is given a tablet with letters and sent to school; he learns to read amazingly quickly, and makes the copying of the tablet one of his favourite pastimes (p. 21).

When Akbar is four years, four months, and four days old, he is sent to his tutor, Asmauddin Ibrahim; although Akbar is seemingly a pupil, in fact it is he who is the teacher, as he knows more than all the pundits; his knowledge is inborn, it is bestowed upon him by God; once, during a lesson he suddenly disappears, which is interpreted as a sign that human sciences are of no use to God's disciple (pp. 519-20).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Judging from '*Ain-i Akbari* by the same Abu'l-Fazl (Jarrett 1948-49), Akbar was actually illiterate. Therefore, these words, which on the one hand point to his extraordinary abilities in learning, on the other hand politely hint at this fact.

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- 9 The prince reveals his lofty spiritual qualities and divine mandate for a vast kingdom/ the dominion over the world (in contrast to *Akbar-nama*, in *Hikayat Aceh* and *Malfuzat-i Timuri* this is primarily understood by 'ulama)
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a. *Faqih* Khoja Manassih interprets the dream of Iskandar's father as a prophecy that his son will become the king of East and West (pp. 115-6).

b. When Iskandar is ten, *sayyid* Syarif al-Muluk says that he had a dream in which a buffalo came up to the prince, uttered the words of a divine *zikir* (*dhikr*), and bowed to him, as if showing its obedience; the dream is interpreted as a sign that Allah will make Iskandar the king of East and West (pp. 143-4).

c. Iskandar performs *zikir* together with nobles and religious leaders who state that Allah has chosen the prince as his vicegerent (*khalifah*) on earth (pp. 145-6).

a. A Sufi saint, *Sayyid* Kelal, prophesizes that Timur will become the ruler of the world, and seventy of his descendants will be kings (pp. 24-5, 30).

b. A grey-haired *sayyid* appears before Timur and predicts that he will become a great monarch (pp. 26-7).

c. In his dream a certain *sayyid* sees the righteous caliph 'Ali who gives orders to bring his war standard to Timur (pp. 9-10).

a. As if deep in sleep, Akbar talks to angels and says that by God's Will he will conquer the world and fulfil all the wishes of those who suffer in the seven climes, that is, in the whole world (p. 591).

b. Akbar is represented as the nursling of Divine Light (p. 472); when he is secretly brought to Kabul, people recognize him immediately, since the Divine Light emanates from his forehead (p. 454); he cannot bear darkness, sheds bitter tears after the lamp is taken from the room, and stops crying only when a new lamp has been brought, thus manifesting his luminous nature (p. 454); the radiant countenance of Akbar reveals attributes of secular and spiritual leadership (p. 590); Humayun arranges a great feast to show Akbar's luminosity to his subjects (p. 484).

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10 'Ulama, sayyid and Sufis give their support and blessings to the prince who is God's chosen one

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- a. At the age of 11 Iskandar gives generous alms to the poor and dervishes, who pray to God for the prince to become a powerful king (p. 144); in a mysterious way Iskandar understands how *faqih* Malik al-Amin managed to cross a river without soaking his clothes, the *faqih* interprets this as a sign that Iskandar is a *wali* of Allah ('God's friend', 'saint') (p. 145).
- b. When Iskandar is 14, the great 'ulama Sheikh Sibghatullah and Sheikh Muhammad Mukarram, the Sufi Ja'far, and other clergymen, who gather in the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina, come to know about the prince and read Fatiha for his sake (pp. 167-8).
- a. Timur constantly gives alms to the poor and dervishes and reveres 'ulama and sayyid who give him their blessings (pp. 5, 10 and elsewhere).
- b. The Sufi sheikh Zaynuddin Tayabadi blesses Timur and gives him mystical symbols of the highest power, Timur constantly turns to this sheikh for advice and receives admonitions from him (pp. 7, 10, 12-3, 18 and elsewhere).
- c. The Qutb (the highest rank in the Sufi hierarchy) protects Timur day and night and gives him his support (pp. 7-8).
- d. The Prophet Muhammad appears before Timur's adversary, 'alim Haji 'Abid, in a dream and says that all Timur's sins will be forgiven because of his love for sayyid (p. 9).
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