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Malay Muslim Historiography from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries concerning the Chinese in the Malay World

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Abstract: The author discusses the information related to China and the Chinese people that can be found in old Malay texts, based on the six texts which are Hikayat Raja Pasai (HRP), Sejarah Melayu (SM), Hikayat Aceh (HA), Peringatan Sejarah Negeri Johor (PSNJ), Hikayat Siak (HS) and Tuhfat al-Nafs (TN). Analysis on these texts revealed that there are various information regarding the Chinese community in the Archipelago, including toponyms, shipping, trading and others. The analysis also proved that the Chinese community in Malay world has experienced some important transition since the 13th century until the 19th.

Key words: Malay Muslim Historiography, Chinese, Malay World, historical sources research.

Old Malay texts form one of the most fascinating parts of the wealth of knowledge existing on Malay letters. One of the most widespread and high quality genres of old Malay texts can be found in manuscripts on the history of Islam or on Malay historiography. Malay Muslim historiography exists in various forms, among which are hikayats or narrative histories, genealogies, histories, chronicles, daily journals and reports; in addition to others. All these are important sources of history which can greatly help in the build of a comprehensive understanding of the history of the Malay world.

Essays from Malay Muslim historiography contain information on rulers, the elite and those in the upper crust of society, in addition to their families and also including information on all those who resided at court. There is much to glean from such sources of knowledge, specifically with regards to politics, intellectual life, trade and economy, shipping, customs and ceremonies, and the very fabric and design of Malay society, to name a few. Scholars have correctly assumed such works to be veritable encyclopedias of Malay life.

It is also useful to consider Malay Muslim historiography as a source of complex history, viz., studies on historical texts which represent the various eras of history and these eras' respective historiographical footprints. Comparative analyses as well as textual analyses based on various texts also enable us to better understand empirical history and the various social conditions of the Malays throughout diverse countries and generations.