MALAY PROVERBS

BIDAL MELAYU

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INTRODUCTION

The present volume is an attempt to present to the casual reader, or resident in Malaya, a selection of two hundred well-known proverbs in such a form that he will be able to appreciate the flavour of the original Malay and, at the same time to gain a quick insight into the application of the adage, without the necessity of perusing a tiresome paragraph dealing with its meaning or implication.

In order to achieve this end I have given, as far as possible, an accurate rendering in English of the Malay maxims followed by a concise English equivalent expression which illustrates the main application. As terseness is of the essence of any saw, clarity had, in some cases, to be sacrificed to the desire to obtain a balanced interpretation which, through its rhyming appeal, should prove simple to assimilate and recollect.

Where the meaning of the proverb is self-evident no attempt has been made to do more than translate the original Malay; in all other cases a dash has been interposed between the translation and the interpretation.

As the various authorities and even the Malays themselves differ in their understanding of the meaning of certain proverbial expressions, I have chosen for illustration the context in which I have been accustomed to hear the particular proverb used, but the reader must bear in mind that the same saying can be used to point a moral in any one of a host of varying circumstances.
The simple grammatical structure of the Malay language lends itself admirably to pithiness of speech and as a consequence any English rendering has a tendency to appear verbose, even where a direct translation conveys the sense unimpaired.

In a community where the written word came late and was the privilege of the few, the customary law of the land and accumulated moral precepts together with many practical injunctions for everyday life, based on the shrewd observation of natural phenomena, were handed down in the form of maxims which are still current and in frequent use.

In order that the reader with some knowledge of the language may avail himself of the opportunity of adding a useful and telling phrase to his speech and, that those without may be tempted to explore the pleasant paths of a simple and delightful tongue, I have added a Glossary containing all the Malay words used in the proverbs together with their meanings as exemplified in the setting in which they are used.

The frontispiece and cover design are by my old friend and contemporary Mr. W. G. Stirling.

A.W.H.
MALAY PROVERBS

Let's live in this world by the rules of old,
For manners are not to be bought and sold.

Don't think there are no crocodiles
Because the water's calm.—
Beware of false security,
Lest you should come to harm.

Like plates and dishes clashing at the slightest lack of care.—
The continual bickerings of an ill-assorted pair.

The prawn does not know of the hump on its back.—
We're seldom aware of the graces we lack.

When a junk is broken up the sharks are full of food.—
'Tis an evil wind indeed that blows nobody good.
BIDAL MELAYU

Hidup di-dunia biar berasat,
Bahasa tidak beralat beli.

Apabila ayer tenang jangan di-sangka tiada buaya.

Bagai pinggan dengan mangkok, salah sedikit hendak tefantok.

Udang ta' sedarkan diri-nya bongkok.

Jong pèchah yu kenyang.
MALAY PROVERBS

In life, by custom hedged around;
In death, we lie wrapped in the ground.—
Men are helpless creatures pent
In their own environment.

A lax eye spells a broken head.—
On dangerous ground mind where you tread.

As a vessel full of oil is borne upon the palm.—
A loving woman’s anxious care to shield her charge from harm.

On his own couch a man may sing:
In his own heart a man is king.

Better white bones than the white of an eye.—
Rather than shame it were better to die.
BIDAL MELAYU

Hidup di-kandong adat, mati di-kandong tanah.

Silap mata pěchah kěpala.

Sępérti mënätang minyak yang pěnoh.

Orang běrdendang di-pębantas-nya, orang běraja di-hati-nya.

Biar puteh tulang jangan puteh mata.
MALAY PROVERBS

The onlooker may be in his most sympathetic state,
But the shoulder 'neath the burden is the one to feel the weight.

Don't drag for anger with a net,
Or push away your daily bread.—
Don't look for trouble, or delay
To take whatever comes your way.

Only once does a banana bear.—
Lost chances never re-occur.

He has the forked tongue of a monitor lizard.—
The insincere talk of a treacherous blackguard.

If shy to ask you will lose your way.—
If slow to question you go astray.
BIDAL MELAYU

Berapa bērat mata mēmandang bērat juga bahu mēnikul.

Maraḥ jangan di-putak, rēzeki jangan di-tolak.

Tā' akan pisang bērbuah dua kali.

Lihad bērchabang bagai biawak.

Malu bērtanya sēsat jalan.
MALAY PROVERBS

As fowl that scratch up in the morn sufficient for their meal.—
The men who live from hand to mouth and no ambition feel.

There is fine as well as wet:
Some day I’ll get even yet.

Escaped from the jaws of a crocodile to enter a tiger’s gape.—
Out of the frying pan into the fire, in a Malayan shape.

From the bow the ship is steered.—
Husbands who by wives are veered.

The full length of your stretch should be the measure of your sheet.—
To cut your coat according to your cloth is always meet.
BIDAL MELAYU

Sěpěrti ayam kuis pagi makan pagi.

Ada hujan ada panas, ada hari boleh balas.

Těrlěpas daripada mulut buaya masok ka-dalam mulut harimau.

Kěmudi dari haluan.

Běrapa panjang lunjor bagitu-lah sělimut.
MALAY PROVERBS

Be good within reason but never do evil.—
Be neither a Saint nor in league with the Devil.

Iron in repose will rust,
While tubers rest and grow in girth.—
Idle minds acquire a crust;
Reflective minds rich stores unearth.

What you lose on the cost you will gain in the wear.—
The price is not lost if the quality's there.

When your waistbelt lacks subsistence,
Close friends, even, keep their distance.

When the pestle is broken the mortar gets lost.—
A husband's neglect may his wife's chastity cost.
BIDAL MELAYU

Buat baik bërpadu-pada, buat jahat jangan sa-kali.

Diam bêsí bërkarat, diam ubi lagi këntal.

Alah di-bêli, mënang di-pakai.

Kalau tiada rial di-pinggang, sahabat yang rapat mënjadi rênggang.

Antan patah lêsong hilang.
MALAY PROVERBS

The clever, off dullards a meal will make:
The sleeper is food for the wide awake.

Broken threads we piece together;
Broken charcoal’s done for ever.—
Lovers’ quarrel may be mended;
Cease to care, and love is ended.

The sap will trickle down the stem where leaves will float away.—
In times of stress our friends depart but relatives will stay.

Better all black than just ink splashed around.—
In for a penny, in for a pound.

As the drum beats so goes the dance.—
Lax control spells lax observance.
BIDAL MELAYU

Chërdek makan si-bingong, tidor, makanan si-jaga.

Putus bēnang boleh di-ikat, patah arang sudah sa-kali.

Kalau gētah bēleleh, kalau daun mēlayang.

Alang-alang bērdawat baīk hitam sa-kali.

Bagaimana bunyi gēndang, bagitu-lah tari-nya.
MALAY PROVERBS

Lightning in a luminous sky;
Thunder impregnate with rain.—
The obvious, which meets the eye,
Does deeper purposes contain.

To place your head in the noose you've set.—
From your own petard a hoist to get.

If you slap water on a tray it spatters your own face.—
Dirty linen in public washed but adds to your disgrace.

Let things fall gently and not with a crash.—
Let folk down easily; never abash.

The tongue being boneless—lightly trips;
Fair words butter no parsnips.
BIDAL MELAYU

Kilat di-dalam kilau, guroh mëngandong hujan.

Tahan jërat sorong këpala.

Di-tëpok ayer di-dulang tërpërchek muka sëndiri juga.

Biar jatoh tërlëtak jangan jatoh tërhëmpas.

Lidah tidak bërtulang.
MALAY PROVERBS

Should rattan be lacking then roots will avail.—
When a whole loaf is wanting a half must prevail.

The mouse-deer may forget the trap.—
But not the trap the deer.—
Men often think they won't be caught
When retribution's near.

The branch breaks off just as the hornbill goes by.—
Circumstantial proof of guilt that's hard to nullify.

What ocean is waveless?—
What person is blameless?

By indirect means of attack to show up any flaw.
To thrash your child in order to get at your son-in-law.—
BIDAL MELYAYU

Tiada rotan akar pun bērguna.

Pelandok lupakan jērat, tētapi jērat tiada mēlupakan pelandok.

Ēnggang lalu ranting patah.

Laut mana ta' bērombak.

Pukul anak sindir mēnantu.
MALAY PROVERBS

To stretch out your legs before you squat.—
On short acquaintance to presume a lot.

Hornbills will with hornbills sport:
Sparrows with their kind consort.—
Birds of a feather flock together:
Rich and poor do not forgather.

Like unto a buffalo butting her calf with the flat of her horn,
not the pointed half.—
To chastise, with mock severity, some childish irregularity.

‘Wont’, in time will conquer pain.—
Men get used to any bane.

To wait for the rice to be served on your knees.—
To hope for the best whilst you sit at your ease.
BIDAL MELAYU

Bêlum dudok bêlunjor dahulu.

Ènggang sama ènggang dan pipit sama pipit juga.

Sêpêrti kârbau mênandok anak-nya, dêngan papar tidak dêngan hujong.

Alah bisa oleh biasa.

Mênantikan nasi têrsaji di-lutut.

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MALAY PROVERBS

To sit like a frog 'neath a coconut shell.—
The smug stay-at-homes who in ignorance dwell.

However dull the embers be,
When blown they burn right merrily.—
Though a man be ne'er so old.
His emotions are not cold.

The flower in the hair is worn, the root is kicked aside.—
Married men who do not tend the parents of the bride.

Soft ears always the ones to be wrung.—
Soft folk always the ones to be stung.

To listen indeed but never to bother.—
To go in at one ear and out at the other.
BIDAL MELAYU

Seperti katak di-bawah tempurung.

Sa-lemau-lemau putong di-dapor di-tiup bernyala juga.

Bunga di-petek, perdu di-tendang.

Telinga lembut yang kerap di-pulas orang.

Dengar, dengar, di-pakai tidak.
MALAY PROVERBS

Fast rolls the big drum's noise around,
Unaware of its hollow sound.—
A fool who talks both loud and long,
Not dreaming that he could be wrong.

As finger-nails upon the quick.—
Fast friends who close together stick.

As a durian* and cucumber—cannot lie beside each other,
A brass pot and earthen pitcher cannot ever swim together.

Like a pea its pod forgetting.—
Men who scorn their early setting.

Think not because the cane is bent the sugar's crooked too.—
It follows not that from bad men no good will e'er ensue.

* A large, edible fruit with a hard, spiny rind.
BIDAL MELAYU

Gendang raya bunyi deras, ta' tahu diri-nya berongga.

Seperti kuku dengen isi.

Seperti durian dengen timun.

Kachang lupakan kulit.

Jangan di-pikir kalau tēbu itu bengkok manisan itu bengkok juga.
MALAY PROVERBS

A mountain I would fain embrace;
Alack! these arms can't span the space.—
Not to be in the position
To fulfil some great ambition.

The axe which dives after the adze.—
To throw good money after bad.

A dead stump in its fall destroys the woodpeckers it
nourished.—
The downfall of a mighty man will ruin those he cherished.

Whilst you dive to drink your fill.—
With one stone two birds to kill.

Were there no breeze the trees would not quiver.—
But for a fire there is no smoke soever.
BIDAL MELAYU

Niat hati 'nak pêlok gunong, apa daya tangan ta’ sampai.

Sêperti kapak mënyelam bêliong.

Punggor rêbah bêlatok mënumpang mati.

Sambil mënyelam sambil minum ayer.

Kalau tiada angin ta’ akan pokok bêrgoyang.
MALAY PROVERBS

The blindman who regains his sights,
Or hunch-back straightened from his plight.—
Folks, not used to their new estate,
Are prone to be immoderate.

A pumpkin by a mouse devoured.—
A picture of a maid desflowered.

If you win you will be charred,
Whilst if you lose, you’re ash.—
Resort to law leads in the end to being shorn of cash.

When the curry is tasty, the rice will be raw.—
Nothing is perfect, there’s always a flaw.

The cheaper you make it the less people tender.—
The more you yield the more you must surrender.
BIDAL MELAYU

Buta baharu chêlek, bongkok baharu bêtul.

Labu di-kêrbok tikus.

Kalah jadi abu, mênang jadi arang.

Gulai sêdap, nasi mêntah.

Makin murah makin mênawar.
MALAY PROVERBS

The bucket which frequents the well,
In course of time, will get a spill.—
The pitcher, at the well will break,
Which goes too oft its thirst to slake.

Within the bounds of other men,
Assume the nature of a hen.

Baa when in a sheepfold but in buffalo pens you moo.—
When you find yourself in Rome then do as Romans do.

Better than a haftless blade is one which has a handle.—
Better far the married state than that of being single.

When the pillow has gone, to take the mat instead.—
A man who weds her sister, when his wife is dead.
BIDAL MELAYU

Di-pelèlar timba ka-pèrigi, sa-kali ta' sa-kali pèchah.

Masok négèri orang bawa résesmi ayam bêtina.

Masok kandang kambing mèngèmbek, masok kandang kèrbau mènguyak.

Daripada bêrputing baik bêrhulu.

Lèpas bantal bêrganti tikar.
MALAY PROVERBS

For this world's goods evince no greed;  
They follow not when you are dead.

Like to the kepayang* fruit;  
Intoxicating to the taste  
And yet to throw away were waste.—
Lovely women of ill-repute,  
To court whom spells a broken heart  
And from whom one is loth to part.

A tiger leaves its skin when dead,  
But men live by their fame instead.

Behaviour denotes birth.—
Ways will show ancestral worth.

Slap your chest and after that consult your appetite.—
Before you plunge into a course make sure you're doing right.

* A species of forest fruit.
BIDAL MELAYU

Harta dunia jangan di-tama', kalau mati tidak mengikut.

Umpama buah kępayang, di-makan mabok di-buang sayang.

Harimau mati tinggalkan bęlang, manusia mati měninggalkan nama.

Usul měnunjokkan asal.

Tępok dada tanya sęlera.
MALAY PROVERBS

The men of today, although skilled beyond mention
And great in their knowledge, yet lack comprehension.

A well-fed man, if offered food,
Will say nice dishes are no good.—
Those who are with good things sated
Often call them over-rated.

Even the back of a chopper, if honed, is sure to get sharp
in a sense.—
Even a fool, if sufficiently schooled, will not be eternally
dense.

Put in the basket, but not in the amount.—
Just to pass muster but of no great account.

Though small it’s a Malacca chilli.—
A small but peppery little filly.
BIDAL MELAYU

Sunggoh pun bijak orang sekarang, ilmu-nya banyak paham-nya kurang.

Orang yang kenyang kalau di-jamu, lauk yang sedap di-kata tawar.

Belakang parang lagi jikalau di-asah neschaya tajam juga.

Masok ambong ta' masok kira.

Kechil-kechil chabai Mêlaka.
MALAY PROVERBS

Smoke is seen when a village burns,
But hearts aflame, no one discerns.—
Though no outward sign is given,
Hearts may be with anguish riven.

Like the two sides of a tray.—
Folk who may face either way.

Leave her now and then if you would really love your wife.—
Absence leads to fondness in a married person's life.

Like to a hammer with a chisel.—
Only to work when others compel.

A debt of gold we can repay,
Kindness indebts till our dying day.
BIDAL MELYAU

Tērbakar kampong kēlihatan asap, tērbakar hati siapa akan tahu.

Sēpērti talam dua muka.

Kasehkan bini tinggal-tinggalkan.

Laksana pahat dēngan pēmukul.

Hutang mas boleh di-bayar, hutang budi di-bawa mati.
MALAY PROVERBS

When elephants in conflict lean,
The mouse-deer gets killed in between.—
Avoid the quarrels of the great,
Lest ruination be your fate.

As a tiger hides its claws.—
Velvet gloves on iron paws.

One persons eats the jack-fruit, but another gets
begummed.—
The, innocent who suffer for the guilty thus are summmed.

Horse mackerel bite towards the night.—
To come on well late in a fight.

'Twere better with a clever foe to contend,
Than seek the companionship of a witless friend.
BIDAL MELAYU

Gajah sama gajah bérjuang, pělandok mati di-těngah-těngah.

Sěpěrti harimau sěmbunyikan kuku.

Lain makan nangka lain kěna gětah-nya.

Chěncharu makan pětang.

Daripada sahabat děngan orang yang bodoh baik běsětěru
děngan orang yang běrakal.
MALAY PROVERBS

Where there's a will there are thousands of ruses; Where there is none, then a thousand excuses.

The paddles in our hand we grasp When folks have reached the further shore.— To start too late upon a course Which other men have done before.

Get your fish but do not let the spear be badly bent.— Obtain your end but in the act your means should not be spent.

In water deep, fish do not die.— Does 'safety in numbers' imply.

A tumble-down house that is painted anew.— When mutton is dressed up as lamb to the view.
BIDAL MELAYU

Hēndak, sa-ribu daya; ta’ hēndak, sa-ribu payah.

Kita baharu chapai pēngayoh orang sudah sampai ka-sēbērang.

Ikan biar dapat sērampang jangan pokah.

Ayer dalam, ikan ta’ mati.

Rumah burok’ di-sapu chat.
MALAY PROVERBS

Access of wealth may manners cost:
Through poverty is prudence lost.

Should you give way to an angry mood,
All fear will be lost in hardihood.—
Mild folk, if plagued beyond endurance,
Are capable of bold performance.

Quite unaware of the smuts on his face, he can count all
the stars in the sky.—
To see the mote in another man’s eye, but the beam in
your own not to spy.

Tho’ but a span it is still the sea.—
Where danger lurks you should prudent be.

Whoever itches will be the one to scratch.—
The shoe may be worn on the foot that will match.
BIDAL MELAYU

Hilang bahasa kērana mas, hilang budi kērana miskin.

Turut hati yang gēram, hilang takut timbul bērani.

Bintang di-langit dapat di-bilang, ta' sēdarkan muka-nya di-sapu arang.

Walau sa-jēngkal lautang.

Siapa gatal dia-lah garu.
MALAY PROVERBS

Pay a just king homage due;
Unjust kings we should subdue.—
To obey the law is right;
Against injustice we should fight.

A buffalo on the plains bespoke.—
Buying a pig in a poke.

The sunshine of a whole year round washed out by a rainy day.—
The labours of a lifetime are through one fault wiped away.

Like a pea upon the tray.—
One who wobbles every way.

The larger the pot, the more rice adheres.—
The better your lot, the greater your cares.
BIDAL MELAYU

Raja adil, raja di-sembah; raja ta' adil, raja di-sangkak.

Membeli kerbau di-padang.

Panas sa-tahun di-hapuskan oleh hujan sa-hari.

Bagai saga di-atas talam.

Besar periok besar kcrak-nya.
MALAY PROVERBS

The fencing which devours the rice.—
Protection at too great a price.

Let bodies be weary,
If hearts remain cheery.—
Men will strive with all their might,
If a pleasing end's in sight.

Like a maiden overcome by the bride's fringe on her forehead.—
As shy and awkward as a maiden shortly to be married.

As a fire eats into chaff.—
Nursing hidden flames of wrath.

To lose at the cock-fight but win in the cheering.—
To cover defeat 'neath a jocular bearing.
BIDAL MELAYU

Pagar makan padi.

Biar badan pênat asalkan hati suka.

Bagai anak dara mabok andam.

Sêpêrti api di-dalam sêkam.

Biar alah sabong asal mênang sorak.
MALAY PROVERBS

To be stuck upright like a spear in pawn.—
To feel out of place and all forlorn.

Even elephants will stumble,
Tho' they have four feet.—
All of us are prone to tumble,
Tho' we be discreet.

He who cannot dance declares that the ground is wet with rain.—
Good workmen find no fault with tools, where bad ones will complain.

When the plating goes, the base will show.—
When the sham wears off the man we know.

Like unto a two-edged saw.—
Profit from each side to draw.
BIDAL MELAYU

Tčrchachak bagai lčmbing tčrgadai.

Gajah bčrkaki ampat lagi tčrdorong.

Sčbab tiada tahu mčnari di-katakan tanah lčmbap.

Hilang sčpoh nampak sčnam.

Sčpčrti gčrgaji dua mata.
MALAY PROVERBS

A tiger that roars on no prey will alight.—
The bark of a dog that is worse than its bite.

The buffalo supplies the milk;
The cow supplies the name.—
The humble fok perform the work,
Where others reap the fame.

When a person is drowsy to push forward a pillow.—
Encouragement upon a course a man’s inclined to follow

A single hook and a piece of bait.—
An enterprise that is tempting fate.

One-handed claps produce no sound.—
a quarrel needs two folks around.
BIDAL MELAYU

Harimau měngaum ta’ mënangkap.

Kĕrbau punya susu sapi punya nama.

Orang měngantok di-sorong bantal.

Kail sa-běntok, umpan sa-ekor.

Di-tĕpok tangan sa-bĕlah ta’ akan bĕrbunyi.
MALAY PROVERBS

In less time than cotton burns,
Men can perform evil turns;
But it takes a thousand years
Ere a sign of good appears.

On your own person to measure a coat.—
By your own standard on others to vote.

When the house is completed the chisel is heard.
When the matter is settled you put in your word:

To look up after you have bumped your head.—
To lock the stable door when the horse has fled.

Water, though it may be slashed, is never cut in twain.—
Relatives may quarrel but they always meet again.
BIDAL MELAYU

Kalau hendak jahat ta' sempat kapas di-bakar, kalau hendak baik sa-ribu tahun.

Ukor baju di-badan sendiri.

Rumah sudah pahat bērbuni.

Sudah tērantok baharu tēngadah.

Ayer di-chēnchang tiada putus.
MALAY PROVERBS

Have a care before the event:
Pay heed before your all is spent.—
Always look before you leap:
Something for the morrow keep.

Rain which to the sky ascends.—
The reverse of normal trends.

As a crab which tells its young to walk a proper gait.—
Satan reproving sin with the injunction to go straight.

Whom fire will not burn nor an immersion damp.—
The incurable ways of an obdurate scamp.

To wait for the fig-tree to lose all its gum.—
To await the Greek kalends which never will come.
BIDAL MELAYU

Ingat antara bēlum kēna, jimat antara bēlum habis.

Hujan bērbalek ka-langit.

Kētam mēnyurohkan anak-nya bērjalan bētul.

Bakar ta' hangus, rēndam ta' basah.

Mēnanti ara ta' bērgētah.
MALAY PROVERBS

Old wives are good indeed to wed;
The mind is schooled and stomach fed.

Before it creeps the plant must grow:
Were it not true would men say so?—
From our own actions always spring
The reasons for folk gossiping.

Rather be swallowed whole by a crocodile,
Than nibbled by tiny fishes all the while.—
'Neath the blows of the great 'twere meet to die,
But not through the torments of lesser fry.

What the hand plucks the shoulder bears.—
We usually create our cares.

An axe on an embroidery frame—we deem
To use a sail needle to sew a fine seam.
BIDAL MELAYU

Alang-kah baik bērbini tua, pērut kēnyang pēngajar datang.

Tā' tumboh ta' mēlata, tā' sunggoh orang tā' kata.

Biar di-tēlan oleh buaya jangan-lah di-pagut oleh ikan kēchil-kēchil.

Tangan mēmētek, bahu mēmikut.

Kapak naik pēmidang.
MalaY PROVERBS

From the newly rich don't seek a boon
Or visit a man on his honeymoon.

The sky is bounded by a ring:
The earth held up by stays.
Through frequent faults of reasoning,
A slave, you end your days.

A peacock which spreads out its tail within some jungle lair.—
One who wastes his sweetness on the empty desert air.

The well goes searching for the pail.—
The forward girls who seek a male.

Pleasure first with pain to follow.—
Sinful joys which lead to sorrow.
BIDAL MELAYU

Orang baharu kaya jangan di-hutang, orang baharu nikah jangan di-tandang.

Langit bërkelikir bumi bértemberang, salah-salah pikir menjadi hamba orang.

Mërak mëngigal di-hutan.

Përigi mënchari timba.

Sëdap dahulu sakit këmudian.

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MALAY PROVERBS

If good seed in the ocean fall,
An island will spring up withal.—
No matter where the seed is strewn,
Good blood will come into its own.

Like an areca-nut cleft in two.—
Well-matched from every point of view.

A herd of water buffaloes can at the least be penned:
A single human being oft is more than we can tend.

When horns grow on the kitchen cat.—
When pigs have wings, we say to that.

The enemy beneath your sheet.—
A false relation or helpmeet.
BIDAL MELAYU

Kalau bêneh yang baik jatoh ka-laut mënjadi pulau.

Bagai pinang di-bêlah dua.

Kêrbau sa-kawan dapat di-kandang, manusia sa-orang tiada têrkawal.

Kalau kuching bêrtandok di-dapor.

Musoh di-dalam sêlimut.
MALAY PROVERBS

Who dyes the sea a deeper green,
Or sharpens thorns within the wood?—
You can't teach tricks to those who've been
Well-versed in them since babyhood.

Who chillis eat will feel the heat.—
Rash acts their consequences meet.

To pick and choose from internodes* and pick upon a
knot.—
Through the wood and through the wood, and a crooked
stick you've got.

An aberrant ship we can recall,
But not the words that we once let fall.

Light bones a heavy stomach make.—
Active men of success partake.

* The smooth stem between the joints of canes.
BIDAL MELAYU

Ayer laut hijau siapa-kah chãlup, duri di-hutan siapa-kah përtajam?

Siapa makan chabai ia-lah mërasa pëdas.

Pileh-pileh ruas têrpileh kapada buku.

Tčrlangsong përahu boleh balek, tčrlangsong chakap ta' boleh balek.

Ringen tulang bërat përut.

69
MALAY PROVERBS

Too lazy to live yet unwilling to die.—
To thrive on ill-health but of work to fight shy.

The fate of a husk is to rise to the top, whilst that of a stone
is to sink.—
To fail or succeed is a matter of luck, and not what we
venture to think.

A long-horned ox, though it may not butt, will have that
reputation.—
If your looks be against you, innocence is no consolation.

Your child when born; when grown, a thorn.—
Of children who grow up to be a menace to the family.

The chipped nail does the tray attack.—
The pot which calls the kettle black.
BIDAL MELAYU

Hidup sēgan, mati ta' mau.

Untong sabut timbul, untong batu tēnggēlam.

Lēmbu tandok panjang, tiada mēnandok pun di-kata orang juga ia mēnandok.

Kēchil-kēchil anak, sudah bēsar mēnjadi onak.

Mēngata ka-dulang paku sērpeh.
MALAY PROVERBS

Horse-mangoes have an ugly rind.—
Sweet natures 'neath rough skins we find.

Like the globe-fish when inflated,
Stomach empty but dilated.—
A person swollen up with pride
And self-esteem, but nought beside.

If the rice were not so cold the plate would not be cracked.—
Your indifference to me, by my dislike is backed.

Like scissors cutting at the tip.—
A quietly delivered quip.

Uncaught the object of your chase, your apron's contents scattered.—
In vain pursuit of greater ends to lose your means that mattered.
BIDAL MELAYU

Buah membachang burok kulit-nya.

Laksana buntal kembong, perut bunchit dalam-nya kosong.

Nasi ta' dingin pinggan ta' rētak.

Bagai gunting makan di-hujong.

Yang di-kējar tiada dapat, yang di-kandong bērchecheran.
Let your children lifeless lie,
But do not let your customs die,
Human lives we can replace,
Not the traditions of a race.

The wet clothes dry upon his waist.—
Of abject poverty to taste.

A single muddy buffalo will soon besmear the rest.—
A people’s name is sullied by the actions of a pest.

Not even water would leak from his fist.—
A close type of man with a miserly twist.

Not to get a single fish and finish all your bait.—
Not to obtain what you wish and waste your whole estate.
BIDAL MELAYU

Biar mati anak jangan mati adat.

Kain basah kering di-pinggang.

Sa-ekor kérbau měmbawa lumpur, sěmua-nya těrpalit.

Ayer di-gěnggam tiada tiris.

Umpan habis, ikan ta’ dapat.
MALAY PROVERBS

Should you a lazy paddle ply,
Your craft will go a-drifting by.—
If one is leisurely inclined,
In life's race you get left behind.

To have taken vinegar the first thing in the morn.—
Soured looks that usually from jealousy are born.

To regret in time is gain;
To repent too late is vain.

If you give him your calf, he wants your thigh.—
Give him an inch for an ell he'll apply.

Like an egg which is perched on the point of a horn.—
A precarious position for one to adorn.
BIDAL MÉLAYU

Sēgan bêrdayong pĕrahu hanyut.

Chuka di-minum pagi hari.

Sēsal dahułu pêndapatan, sēsal kēmudian apa guna-nya

Bēri bētis hēndak paha.

Sēpērti tēlor di-hujong tandok.
MALAY PROVERBS

Palembang* unbeaten and rations run low.—
When means are exhausted with little to show.

As rice-dust on the measure’s brim;
Which is not missed if it fall out,
Nor does it fill should it fall in.—
A person of such small account
That, tho’ his absence none would note,
His presence does to nought amount.

Let us go slow so long as we’re safe.—
Provided we get there, at slowness don’t chafe.

Honey without and gall within.—
A false heart beneath a fair skin.

Like a gem with a ring for its setting.—
A match that’s pre-eminently fitting.

* In reference to an unsuccessful siege by the Dutch.
BIDAL MÉLAYU

Pělabor habis Pělembang ta' alah.

Sêpêrti lêmukut di-têpi gantang, masok ta' pênoh këluar ta' luak.

Biar lambat asal sêlamat.

Di-luar madu, di-dalam hêmpêdu.

Sêpêrti chinchin dêngan pêrmata.
MALAY PROVERBS

A Scops owl moping to the moon.—
The longing of a love-lorn loon.

A snake which crawls about a root
Is not less poisonous to boot.—
The powerful who deign to bend
Are no less powerful in the end.

Like a barren woman who at length is brought to bed.—
Of boundless joy and happiness symbolically is said.

If he can’t seize a horn then an ear he will twist.—
In obtaining an end any means to enlist.

A dig in the ribs should cause an ache.—
A bribe should always be adequate.
BIDAL MELAYU

Laksana punggok mėrindukan bulan.

Jikalau ular mėnyusor akar tiada akan hilang bisa-nya.

Bagai mak mandul baharu bėranak.

Tiada dapat tandok tėlinga di-pulaskan.

Tumbok rusok biar sėnak.
MALAY PROVERBS

If in some course you pleasure find,
Your broken head with cord you bind.—
However great the cost may be,
If pleased, you pay it willingly.

Charcoal smeared upon your face.—
An unforgivable disgrace.

As if it weren’t enough to fall, the ladder lands on top.—
Misfortunes seldom singly come but always in a crop.

Where do ants die but in sugar?—
Men risk ruin for their pleasure.

I am not a child in the banana-eating stage.—
I am not a simpleton but one of mature age.
Hati kalau suka kepala pechah disimpai.

Muka têchonteng arang.

Lagi jatoh di-timpa tangga.

Di-mana sêmut mati kalau tidak ada gula?

Aku bukan budak makan pisang.
MALAY PROVERBS

When you are without a gun,
All and sundry you should shun:
When you're without store of rice,
All work ceases in a trice.—
Not without capital can work proceed:
Lacking protection you're helpless indeed.

Different trays have different stands.
Other men have other ways.

Because of warring with the well to die at last of thirst.—
Whoever quarrels with his bread and butter comes off worst.

Like water on a calladium leaf.—
As water off a duck's back, in brief.

Like dew on the tip of a blade of grass.—
A transient love that will surely pass.
BIDAL MELAYU

Kalau ta' bersenapang, baik béri jalan lapang:
Kalau tiada padi, sa-barang kérja ta' jadi.

Lain dulang lain kaki, lain orang lain hati.

Sébab bérkélahi děngan périgi, akhir-nya mati dahaga.

Sépérti ayer di-daun kéladi.

Bagai ēmbun di-hujong rumput.
MALAY PROVERBS

Tho' gold may pour from foreign skies,
Whilst spears and daggers rain at home;
Yet better off is he who lies
On his own soil, than far to roam.

Pendant without a string in sight.—
A poor deserted woman's plight.

To ask for some blood from a piece of dried fish.—
To squeeze blood from a stone is the apposite wish.

'Twas your own forefinger thrust in your eye.—
Let down by someone on whom you rely.

On hearing thunder in the sky your water jar to empty.—
To lose the substance that you have for shadows of vague plenty.
BIDAL MÉLAYU

Hujan mas perak di-négréi orang, hujan kérís lémbing di-
négréi sëndiri, baik juga di-négréi sëndiri.

Bërgantong tidak bërtali.

Minta darah pada daeng.

Tëlunjok mënchuchok mata.

Dëngarkan guntor di-langit ayer di-tëmpayan di-churahkan.
MALAY PROVERBS

A buffalo pierced with a ring through its nose.—
To follow around in a submissive pose.

The cat awaits the pendant fish.—
A symbol for a latent wish.

The type of bravery of a fly.—
Persistent efforts to annoy.

Poling downstream excites the crocodiles risability.—
Wasted effort portrayed as the height of absurdity.

A deer into the village strays.—
Or shy and awkward in one's ways.
BIDAL MELAYU

Kerbau chuchok hidong.

Ikan gantong, kuching tunggu.

Bérani, bérani lalat.

Hilir bégalah, buaya kéňawa.

Rusa masok kampong.
MALAY PROVERBS

It's not as if there's just one flower or solitary fish.—
There are just as good fish in the sea as e'er came out of it.

To fall on to a mattress spread.—
Of one who a rich wife has wed.

Like the king-crab and its mate.—
Couples ne'er found separate.

Whilst the bird is on the wing, the pepper's ready mashed.—
To start counting one's chickens before they are hatched.

Like the brinjal and the dried fish.—
Fated to meet in the same dish.
BIDAL MELAYU

Bunga bukan sa-kuntum; ikan bukan sa-ekor.

Jatoh ka-tilam.

Sêpêrti këronchor dëngan bêlangkas.

Burong têrbang di-pipiskan lada.

Bagai têrong dëngan ikan këring.
MALAY PROVERBS

Through just a drop of indigo a jug of milk is lost.—
A little act of carelessness a lifetime's work may cost.

Don't stir up a hornet's nest.
Leave the sleeping dog at rest.

The worm becomes a serpent great.—
The humble raised to high estate.

Tho' the wound be gone, the scar will live.—
One can't forget tho' one may forgive.

On the heels of desire does death await;
Follow your feelings and ruin's your fate.
BIDAL MELAYU

Sébab nila sa-titek rosak susu sa-bélanga.

Sarang tèbuan jangan di-jolok.

Chaching ménjadi ular naga.

Luka boleh hilang, parut tinggal juga.

Ikut hati mati; ikut rasa binasa.
MALAY PROVERBS

When the lower fronds of the palm tree fall,
The upper leaves should not laugh withal.—
In another's demise, or loss, discern
The coming approach of your own turn.

Do crocodiles a carcass spurn?—
Will men from evil promptings turn?

The prop was snapped asunder as the betel-vine ascended.—
The promise of a fruitful life that early death has ended.

Take out the essence and discard the dross.—
Pick out the worthwhile and reject the gross.

The turtle lays a thousand eggs,
Yet no one is the wiser;
The hen, which lays a single egg,
Is a world-wide advertiser.
BIDAL MELAYU

Pélēpah bawah luroh, pélēpah atas jangan kētawa.

Ada-kah buaya mēnolak bangkai?

Sirch naík, junjong patah.

Ambil pati-nya buangkan hampas.

Pěnyu itu běrtēlor bēribu-ribu sa-orang pun tiada tahu, ayam běrtēlor sa-biji pěchah khabar sa-buah něgěri.
PRONUNCIATION

The consonants are pronounced as in English but the vowels are given their continental sounds, so that
\[ a = ah, \quad e = eh, \quad i = ee, \quad o = oh, \quad u = oo. \]

The atonic or toneless ē is pronounced as "er" with the "i" not stressed, or as the "a" in alone.

In an open syllable, unless it be a final one, the vowel is long, whilst in a closed syllable it is always short. A final "a" dies away in sound, as in Java.

The dipthong "ai" is pronounced as in aisle and "au" as in sauerkraut.

An "h" between two dissimilar vowels is elided, but as a final letter it is gently aspirated.

A final "k" forms a glottal check or stop which abruptly shortens the preceding vowel sound.

There is no strong accent at all but there is a slight stress on the penultimate syllable unless it ends in ē.

In the system of romanizing employed in Indonesia the Dutch sound values of certain letters differ from the English, so that—

\[ dj = j, \quad j = y, \quad oe = u, \quad sj = sh, \quad tj = ch, \quad ch = kh. \]

In addition the vowel "ē" (eh) may be accented thus "ē", whilst the toneless "ē" (er) is not marked at all, whilst in modern usage "œ" is replaced by "u" or "o".
GLOSSARY
GLOSSARY

A

abu  ash
ada  to be, to have,
      there is
adat  custom
adil  just, fair
akan  will
akar  root
akhir  end
aku  I
alah  to lose, to be
  beaten
alang-kah  how splendid
alang-alang  in a mild way
ambil  to take
ambong  basket on back
ampat  four
anak  child, young
to trim a
      bride's hair
angin  wind
anton  pestle
antara  between
apa  what
apabila  when
api  fire
ara  fig
arang  charcoal
to hone
asah  origin
asal

asalkan  provided
asap  smoke
atas  on, above
ayam  fowl
ayer  water

B

badan  body
bagai  like
bagaimana  in whatever
      way
bagitu  in that way,
      so, thus
baharu  newly
bahasa  language,
      polite ad-
      dress
bahu  shoulder
baik  good, well
baju  coat
bakar  to burn
to requite
balas  to return
balek  carcasse
bangkai  pillow
bantal  much
banyak  wet
basah  stone
batu  to take, to
      convey
bawa
bawah
bayar
bêlah
bêlakang
bêlang
bêlanga
bêlangkas
bêlatok
bêli
bêliong
bêlum
bêlunjor
bênang
bêneh
bengkok
bêradat
bêraja
bêrákal
bêranak
bêrani
bêrapa
bêrat
bêrbalek
bêrbini
bêrbuah
bêrbunyi
under
to pay
to cleave
back
stripes
pot
king-crab
woodpecker
to buy
adze
not yet
to stretch
one’s legs
thread
seed
bent
to have one’s
conventions
to reign
clever,
sensible
to give birth
brave
how much,
however
heavy
to return
to have a wife
to fruit
to sound
bêrchabang
bêrchecheran
bêrdawat
bêrdayong
bêrdendang
bêrgalaih
bêrganti
bêrgantong
bêrgêtahe
bêrgoyang
bêrguna
bêrhulu
forked
to dribble
away
covered in ink
to paddle
to hum a tune
to pole
to substitute
to hang
to have sap
to sway
of use
to have a
handle
to give
in thousands
to walk
to sell
to engage in
combat
to have feet
to rust
to fight
to be ringed
to blaze
to have waves
hollow
reasonably
to have a
shank
bëršënapang  to have a gun
bëršëtëru  to be at
eemity
bërtali  to have a rope
bërtandok  to have horns
bërtanya  to ask
bërtëlor  to lay eggs
bërtëmberang  to be stayed
bërtulang  to have a bone
lare
bësar  iron
bësi  female
bëtina  calf of leg
bëtis  correct, upright
bëtul  to let, to permit
biar  accustomed
biasa  monitor-lizard
biawak  wise
bijak  to count
biang  to destroy
binasa  muddle-headed
bingong  wife
bini  star
bintang  pain, venom
bisa  stupid
bodoh  can, to be able
bolch  hunch-back
bongkok  fruit
buat  to throw away
buang  to do
buaya  crocodile
budak  youth
budi  kindness
bukan  no, not
buku  knot
bulan  moon
bumi  earth
daih  distended
bunchit  flower
globe-fish
bunga  rotten, ugly
bunga  bird
bunyi  blind
to sound
chabai  to sound
chaching  to sound
chakap  chatter
chapai  to grasp
chat  paint
chélek  opened (of the
eyes)
chélp  to dye
chënchang  to slice
chëncharu  horse-mackerel
chérdék  clever
chinchin  ring
chuchok  to pierce
chuka  vinegar
churahkan  to pour out
<table>
<thead>
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<th>dada</th>
<th>chest</th>
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<th>fruit, sp.</th>
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<td>daeng</td>
<td>dried fish</td>
<td>ekor</td>
<td>tail, a classifier of animals</td>
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<td>dahaga</td>
<td>thirst</td>
<td>ēmbun</td>
<td>dew</td>
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<td>dahulu</td>
<td>first of all, previously</td>
<td>ēnggang</td>
<td>hornbill</td>
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<td>in, within, deep and to obtain, to get, can</td>
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<td>daya</td>
<td>to listen, to hear</td>
<td></td>
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<td>quick</td>
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<td>in, on, at, a sign of the passive</td>
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<tr>
<td>dēraś</td>
<td>he</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>di-</td>
<td>to keep quiet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>cold</td>
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<td>dingin</td>
<td>two</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>diri</td>
<td>to sit</td>
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<td>platter, tray</td>
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<td>world</td>
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**E**

gajah
gantang
gantong
garu
gatal
gēndang
gēnggam
gēram
gērgaji
gētaḥ
gula
gulai
guna
gunong
gunting
guntor
guroh

gallon
to hang
to scratch
to itch
drum
to grasp
excited
saw
latex, sap
sugar
curry
use
mountain
scissors
thunder

**G**

**H**

habis
haluan
to finish
ship's bow
<p>| hamba     | slave     | ingat | to remember                  |
| hampas    | dregs     | ini (kan) | this, in this case          |
| hangus    | scorched  | isi   | quick of flesh               |
| hanyut    | to drift  | itu   | the, that                    |
| hapuskan  | to efface |       |                               |
| hari      | day       |       |                               |
| harimau   | tiger     |       |                               |
| harta     | possessions |       |                               |
| hati      | mind, heart |       |                               |
| hěmpědu   | gall      |       |                               |
| hěndak    | to want, to wish to | jadi | to become, to come to anything |
| hidong    | nose      |       | to be watchful                |
| hidup     | to live, alive |       | evil, wicked                  |
| hijau     | green     | jaga  | road, way                     |
| hilang    | to lose, loss | jahat | to feast, to entertain        |
| hiliar    | to go downstream | jalan | don’t                          |
| hitam     | black     | jangan | to fall                       |
| hujan     | rain      | jatoh | noose                         |
| hujiang   | point, end | jèrat | if                            |
| hutang    | forest    | jikalau | careful                     |
| hutan     | debt, indebted | jimat | to prod                      |
|           |           | jolok  | junk                          |
|           |           | jong   | just the same, for all that  |
|           |           | juga   | prop                          |
| ia        | he        | junjong | to, towards                  |
| ikan      | fish      |       | bean                          |
| ikat      | to tie    | ka (pada) | an interrogative particle   |
| ikut      | to follow | kachang |                               |
| ilmu      | knowledge | -kah  |                               |</p>
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<td>time, occasion</td>
</tr>
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<td>to be defeated</td>
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<td>if</td>
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<td>goat, sheep</td>
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<td>village</td>
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<td>kandang</td>
<td>pen, fold</td>
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<td>to be enveloped</td>
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<td>kapak</td>
<td>axe</td>
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<td>cotton</td>
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<td>kasehkan</td>
<td>to love</td>
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<td>to say</td>
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<td>kēchil</td>
<td>tiny</td>
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<td>to chase</td>
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<td>to push forward</td>
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sunggoh pun although
susu milk

T

ta' not
ta' akan unlikely
tahan to set
tahu to know
tahun year
tajam sharp
takut fear
talam tray
tama' to covet
tanah earth, ground
tandang to visit
tandok horn
tangan arm
tangga ladder	
tanya to ask
tari dancing
tawar tasteless
tèbu sugar-cane
tèbuan hornet
tèlan to swallow
tèlinga car
tèlunjok forefinger
tèlor egg
tèmpayan large jar
tèmpurong coconut shell
tènang calm
tèndang to kick
tèngadah to look up
tèngah middle
tèngah-tèngah in the midst
tènggèlam to sink	
tèpi edge
tèpok to pat
tèrantok collided
tèrbakar on fire
tèrbang to fly
tèrchachak implanted
tèrchonteng smeared
tèrdorong to trip up
tèndang to kick
tèrgadai in pawn
tèrhèmpas dashed down
tèrkawal guarded
tèrlangsong to overshoot
tèrlètak the mark
tèrlèpas placed down
tèrlèpas escaped
tèrong egg-plant
tèrpalit besmeared
tèrpèrechek splashed
tèrpileh to pick on
tèrsaji served

tètapi but
tiada is, or are not,
tidak without

tidak no, not
tidor to sleep
tikar    mat
 tikus    mouse
tilam    mattress
timba    dipper
timbul    to float
timpa    to fall on top of
timun    cucumber
 tinggal (kan)    to leave behind
tiris    to leak
titek    drop
tiup    to blow
tolak    to push
tua    old
tulang    bone
tumboh    to sprout
tumbok    to punch
tunggu    to wait
turut    to follow

ubi
 udang
 ukor
 ular
 umpama
 umpan
 untong
 usul

U
 tuber
 prawn
 to measure
 snake
 example,
 instance
 bait
 fate
 behaviour

W
 even if

Y
 who, which,
 that, which

yu
 shark