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Global Networks and Religious Dynamics: Reading the *Hikayat Raja Pasai* of Pre-Colonial Malay-Archipelago

Abstract: *This article examines* Hikayat Raja Pasai*, a fourteenth century Malay text, to understand the emergence of a global network that played a crucial role in the Islamization of Malay-Archipelago. This text provides us with a historical narrative on the engagement of northern Sumatra, the site of Samudra Pasai kingdom, with Islamic global networks, particularly international Muslim merchants. This network became the primary influence in the thought of both ruling elites and people of the kingdom. This article emphasizes that this global network provided momentum for the Malay people to embrace a new religious faith, Islam, amidst an emerging cosmopolitan lifestyle and to obtain economic advantage out of their involvement in the burgeoning maritime commerce. The* Hikayat Raja Pasai, *therefore, helps explain the continued growth of Islam over the course of northern Sumatra's history.*

Keywords: *Hikayat Raja Pasai,* Islam, Global Network, Trade, Politics, Samudra Pasai.

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Abstrak: *Artikel ini mengkaji* Hikayat Raja Pasai, *sebuah teks Melayu abad keempat belas, untuk memahami kemunculan jaringan global yang memainkan peran penting dalam Islamisasi Kepulauan Melayu. Teks ini memberi kita narasi sejarah tentang keterlibatan Sumatra bagian utara, lokasi Kerajaan Samudra Pasai, dengan jaringan global Islam, khususnya para pedagang Muslim internasional. Jaringan ini menjadi pengaruh utama dalam pemikiran elit penguasa maupun masyarakat kerajaan. Artikel ini menekankan bahwa jaringan global ini memberikan momentum bagi masyarakat Melayu untuk memeluk keyakinan agama baru, yaitu Islam, di tengah gaya hidup kosmopolitan yang sedang berkembang dan untuk memperoleh keuntungan ekonomi dari keterlibatan mereka dalam perdagangan maritim yang sedang tumbuh. Oleh karena itu,* Hikayat Raja Pasai *membantu menjelaskan pertumbuhan Islam yang berkelanjutan sepanjang sejarah Sumatra bagian utara.*

Kata Kunci: Hikayat Raja Pasai, *Islam, Jaringan Global, Perdagangan, Politik, Samudra Pasai.*

ملخص: تستعرض هذه المقالة كتاب «حكاية راجا باساي»، وهو نصٌّ ماليزي يعود إلى القرن الرابع عشر، بهدف فهم نشوء شبكة عالمية لعبت دوراً حاسماً في أسلمة الأرخبيل الماليزي. يقدم هذا النص رواية تاريخية عن انخراط شمال سومطرة، حيث كانت تقع مملكة سامودرا باساي، في الشبكات الإسلامية العالمية، وخاصةً شبكة التجار المسلمين الدوليين. أصبحت هذه الشبكة المؤثر الأهم في فكر كل من النخبة الحاكمة وعامة الشعب في المملكة. تؤكد هذه المقالة أن الشبكة العالمية قد وفرت حافزًا للشعب الملايوي لاعتناق دين جديد، وهو الإسلام، في خضم نمط حياة عالمي ناشئ، وللحصول على ميزة اقتصادية من خلال مشاركتهم في التجارة البحرية المزدهرة. وبالتالي، تساعد «حكاية راجا باساي» في تفسير النمو المستمر للإسلام على مرّ تاريخ شمال سومطرة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: حكاية راجا باساي، الإسلام، الشبكة العالمية، التجارة، السياسة، سامودرا باساي.

I would like to begin this article with an illustration from the *Hikayat Raja Pasai* (Pasai Chronicle), a fourteenth century Malay text.[1] In one of its accounts, the *Hikayat* relates the story of Shaykh Isma'il from Mecca who came to the kingdom of Samudra Pasai to Islamize the local people. After staying there for some time, Shaykh Isma'il one day visited Sultan Malik al-Salih, the Samudra Pasai ruler, announcing his intention to leave for Mecca. Here, the text describes the Sultan as gathering together presents for the Shaykh, consisting of well-known spice produce from Sumatra: ambergris, camphor, eaglewood, benzoin, cloves and nutmeg (Jones 2013, 25).

While this produce is also mentioned in the travel account of Ibnu Baṭṭūṭa from the early fourteenth century (Gibb 1994 [IV], 880-881), this story in the *Hikayat* highlights the Sultan's strong interest in establishing religious as well as socio-economic relations with the elites of Mecca. This can be understood by the fact that the late thirteenth century, during which Samudra Pasai was established,[2] was a time that bore witness to profound socio-political changes and developments in maritime commerce, alongside the trend which Milner (2023) referred to as "the timing of Islamization in Southeast Asia". Sultan Malik al-Saleh was the first Muslim ruler in Sumatra to participate in the thriving trade emerging from the island's links to maritime economic activities in the Indian Ocean, where Muslim merchants played a leading role (Chaudhuri 1985; Wink 2002). As such, good relations with Meccan elites were especially important to enhance his global commercial engagement and networks.

This story in the *Hikayat* highlights the significance of global networks that seem to have taken a leading position in the socio-political and religious dynamics of the Malay-archipelago of the period. As a matter of fact, the *Hikayat* is crucial to understanding these dynamics. Written after 1350 (Winstedt 1969, 155),[3] the *Hikayat* has historical value worthy of exploration, despite it often being seen as "semi-historical romance" (Hill 1960, 25). As Jones asserts (2013), the abundance of myths in its narratives should be viewed as "authentic record of what happened". From this perspective, the text helps us understand the historical reconstruction of the globalized Samudra Pasai, where Muslim merchants from Middle East and Indian countries engaged in the advancement of maritime commerce and in establishing the kingdom as part of the Muslim world.

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It is important to examine the ways the *Hikayat* describes and provides meaning to this development. To be more specific, how does the text understand the ways of thinking among the rulers and the people of Samudra Pasai in relation to the profound changes taking place at the time? This question engages with the argument that the experience of Samudra Pasai during this period gave rise of new views and understandings of the world that were strongly associated with the international community of Muslim merchants. As seen in the *Hikayat*, the Malay people increasingly engaged in an emerging cosmopolitan lifestyle in trading centers, where economic advancement and religious practices appeared to be the main focus of public life. With the support of the kingdom, these economic hubs served as arenas where the "culture of Islamicate", to quote Hodgson (1977 [2], 541), emerged as the leading element in the lifestyles of both international Muslim merchants and local residents.

The article engages with issues beyond those covered by Milner (2023), who focused on the crucial role of the idea of monarchy and rulers (1983) in the Islamization of Southeast Asia. This process of religious conversion requires further explanation, as it seems to have occurred alongside prosperity and engagement in global trade networks. I argue that conversion to Islam was a conscious decision that local people took among the options available to them in the cosmopolis, with primary goal being to obtain economic advantages. In a similar vein, this article also takes a different approach compared to Hall's study (2001), which focuses on the institutional role of Samudra Pasai as a center of trade and power.

Taking the above issues as a point of departure, this article aims to provide a historical explanation as to why the local people in Samudra Pasai were interested in, and remained committed to, Islamic beliefs, and continued to undergo further Islamization over the course of history.

The Kingdom's Formation

The *Hikayat*'s understanding of Samudra Pasai's formation is closely related to the story of Merah Silu, the pre-Islamic name of Malik al-Salih. It begins when Merah Silu and his brother undertook a journey that was pivotal to his future as the ruler of Samudra Pasai. He decided to leave his forefather's land Semerlanga, as he believed nothing good would come from living there. He and his brother headed west in

search of a better place to call home. After many stops along the way, they finally reached a city called Biruan, "and there they settled, the two of them, one either side of the river" (Jones 2013: 11). From Biruan, where his brother remained, Merah Silu continued his journey to find another place to live. The *Hikayat* describes him as having passed a hill and then, "after many days' travel towards the headwater of the Pasangan river" (Jones 2013, 14), finally arriving in Hulu Karang.

It was here that Merah Silu began to build his power base. Hill (1960, 12) asserts that the Pesangan river is "the longest and the broadest anywhere along that stretch of coast, the only one allowing easy access far inland". Moreover, the river functioned as "a natural highway for the transport of jungle produce to traders near its mouth". This river most likely provided Merah Silu with resources enabling him to become involved in trading activities on the Pesangan estuary. The *Hikayat* outlines that these activities developed further once Merah Silu met Megat Sekandar, a local ruler in the area who "bade him stay and entertained him with food and drink" (Jones 2013: 14). As an elder brother of Sultan Malik al-Nasar, the ruler of a region named Rimba Jeran, Megat Sekandar is described as providing strong political support for Merah Silu, bestowing upon him economic and political power.

Given Hill's notes on the Pesangan river, it can be assumed that the area was already bustling with emerging trade. Its geography and climate—as it was situated on the peripheries of the opposing wind systems of the Indian Ocean and the Chinese Sea—had predestined the area to be closely involved in maritime trade (Meilink-Reolofsz 1970: 138). Much more importantly, the period Merah Silu began to develop power, the thirteenth century, is acknowledged as a turning point in the history of maritime trade in the Malay-Archipelago and Southeast Asia. New patterns of trade, which involved areas on Sumatra's northern coast, replaced older systems centered in southern Sumatra (Hall 1985: 195-231; 1981, 21-47).

The rise of this new trading pattern began with the decline of the Hindu-Buddhist kingdom Srivijaya on the southern coast of Sumatra. After seizing political and economic power in the straits of Malacca from the seventh to tenth centuries, Srivijaya was conquered by the Cola Dynasty from Southern India in the early eleventh century (Hall 1985, 100-02; Wolters 1970, 49-76). The decline of Srivijaya had far-reaching effects on the development of maritime trade in the

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Malay-Archipelago. The southern coast of Sumatra and the areas along the strait of Malacca were practically closed to international trading activities. At the same time, with the rise of Majapahit in 1293, Java increasingly emerged as a "dominant entrepot" of eastern parts of the Archipelago. The products of the areas, especially spices, which were at that time in great demand on the international market, fell into the hands of Javanese rulers. More importantly, the economic policy of the Javanese kingdom was focused on destroying Srivijaya and maintaining control of the straits (Schrieke 1955 [1], 18-36; Wolters 1970, 45; Hall 1985, 212).

These regional developments provided Samudra Pasai on the northern coast of Sumatra with a great opportunity to develop as a new center for international trade networks. Unlike Srivijaya, Majapahit established a loose hegemony on the Sumatra north coast, which was resulted in the emergence of new entrepôts (Wolters 1970: 67; Hall 1984: 64). It is no surprise that the *Hikayat* features specific passages for the story of the Majapahit kingdom, which was the subject of great praise (Jones 2013). This situation was further reinforced by political changes in China, especially the rise of Yuan and Ming Dynasties in the thirteenth and fourteenth century respectively. In contrast to the previous Sung and Tang Dynasties which closed their entrepôts to foreign merchants, the Yuan and Ming dynasties' political and economic policies were more concerned with, and even interventionist in, Southeast Asian affairs (Wolters (1970: 67). At the same time, Indian Muslim merchants who dominated the trade network between India and China also gained a foothold in that area (Hall 1985, 21; Schrieke 1955, 16).

During this period, Samudra Pasai became a regular port on international trading voyages, luring in foreign merchants. The account of Tome Pires (1944, 142) describes Samudra Pasai as "becoming prosperous, rich, with many merchants from different Moorish and Kling nations, who do a great deal of trade". He also noted the presence of Muslim merchants from other countries, such as Bengalis (who were the most numerous), Turks, Arabs, Persians, and Gujaratis. This description is supported by the fact that the northern coast of Sumatra produced spices, in particular pepper, which were in great demand in Europe and on international markets (Hall 1985, 22-4).[4] The newly-emerging state also engaged in political diplomacy with China. The

Chinese source *Yuan-Shih* mentions that the ruler of Samudra (*Sa-mu-ta-la*) sent two ministers to the Chinese court in 1282 (Hill 1963, 6-7).

It was presumably at this time that Merah Silu, with the support of Megat Sekandar, became the ruler of the emerging state, which came to be known as Samudra Pasai. The *Hikayat* relates the moment when Merah Silu was appointed as ruler in such a way as to highlight the crucial role of economics; Merah Silu was wealthy and it was the main reason for his being elevated as ruler. "It would be a good thing if we made him king; for he is fit to be a raja, and he is wealthy so we can have confidence in him", Megat Sekandar said as he consulted the assembly and found that they agreed with his proposal. This story should be understood in the context of the Pesangan estuary, which served as Merah Silu's home and a growing trade hub (Jones 2013, 16).

Megat Sekandar's support for Merah Silu continued as he consolidated his power. With this backing, Merah Silu was able firmly establish control. He even began to be acknowledged as a ruler beyond Megat Sekandar's zone of influence, including seizing control of Barus, a kingdom in west part of Sumatera that had already been Islamized (Drakard (1989, 53-82). The ruler of Barus recognized Merah Silu as a ruler by sending him *sembah* (a sign of respect). After some time, Merah Silu was ready to proclaim rule, at his own behest, over a kingdom of his own founding. As can be gleaned from the *Hikayat*, Merah Silu became a real king with the power he accumulated and later converted to Islam to become Malik al-Saleh.

A Shaykh from Mecca

Bearing in mind the role of geography and rising maritime commerce in the formation of the kingdom, Merah Silu is described in the *Hikayat* as having "built himself a palace where he lived with his chiefs and his subjects" (Jones 2013, 19), as a way to respond to the growing number of overseas traders who came to his territory. In fact, the travel accounts of Tome Pires (1944, 1942) report the presence of Muslim merchants in Samudra Pasai, especially those from Bengal and Gujarat who formed the main contingent, next to Arabs, Turks and Persians from the Middle East. As in the case of Barus in the tenth century, Muslim merchants contributed to bringing Samudra Pasai into the Indian Ocean world, which Drakard (1989, 72) referred to as the "Arab speaking Mediterranean". This, in turn, facilitated the

dissemination of Islam along the trading network from Middle East to Southeast Asia.

Even so, the geographic importance of the Indian Ocean was not a new concept for the rulers in the Archipelago. It had already been present in their minds before they converted to Islam. This can be gleaned from the letters of correspondence between the ruler of the pre-Islamic kingdom Srivijaya in Sumatra, Sri Indravarman, and the caliph of Umayyad Dynasty, 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Aziz (717-720). While the letters provide strong evidence of early contact between the Archipelago and the Middle East (Fatimi 1963, 121-40), it is important to note that the Srivijaya ruler declared himself "the king of *al-Hind*", pointing to the geographical notion that the kingdom had already been identified as being part and parcel of the Indian Ocean world. International trade had brought the kingdom in the area, which was known in Arabic sources as Zabaj (Tibbetts 1979, 100-16), into contact with the Middle East (Braddell 1857, 237-77). Therefore, the title "the king of *al-Hind*" was used as a diplomatic term to demonstrate his equal position to "the king of the Arabs" of the Umayyad Caliph.

The strategic position of the Indian Ocean ensured merchants from the Middle East flowed to trading centers in the archipelago for spice products. As archaeological findings have recently affirmed, this flow of merchants began in the seventh century.[5] Therefore, it was no surprise that *Sejarah Melayu*, another text of Malay history, relates that a number of the inhabitants of Samudra Pasai in the thirteenth century claimed to know Arabic (Winstedt 1938, 76), and presumably were familiar with the people and their religious tradition. Furthermore, local elites had close ties with Arabs. The ministers that Samudra Pasai's ruler sent to the Chinese court, as noted in the *Yuan-Shih*, bore the very Islamic names of Husain and Sulaiman (Hill 1960, 8; 1979, 6-7). This meant that in Samudra Pasai during this period, Islam and Muslims had already become part of daily life. The people could see how the Arab and Indian Muslims lived in the trading centers, made social contact with local inhabitants, adopted their languages and customs, and even married local women; all these served as channels through which they sought to expand their Muslim connections (Arnold 1961, 364).

The view of Southeast Asia as part of *al-Hind* is present in the narrative of *Hikayat* regarding the arrival of Shaykh Isma'il from Mecca, who is described as having a crucial role in the Islamization of

Samudra Pasai. Shaykh Isma'il was the captain of a ship provided by the Caliph of Mecca who heard news of a kingdom in the 'land below the winds' (nowadays often taken to refer to maritime Southeast Asia), to which the Prophet Muhammad had once referred before he passed away. It is narrated in the text that the Prophet Muhammad once said that "in times to come there will arise in the east a city called Samudra; when you hear tell of this country, make ready a ship to take to it all the regalia and panoply of royalty; guide its people into the religion of Islam; let them recite the words of the profession of faith" (Jones 2013: 18). Thus, the Caliph readied a ship to sail to Samudra Pasai under the command of Shaykh Isma'il.

In this respect, it is worth closely examining Shaykh Isma'il's journey to Southeast Asia. According to the *Hikayat*, Shaykh Isma'il was ordered to make a stop at a place called Ma'bari, where he was welcomed by Sultan Muhammad, the ruler of the area, who provided him with food and sweetmeats. The Sultan also offered his eldest son as a guide for Shaykh Isma'il to enable him to enter Samudra Pasai (Jones 2013, 19).[6] From this story, we might ask why the *Hikayat* features Ma'bari in its narrative of the journey? In order to answer this question, we must first understand Ma'bari's background.

First, we should examine Ma'bari's location. The *Hikayat* provides no explanation of its geographical site. The only details come from Marrison (1951, 31), who believed that it was the Arabic name for the province of south India on the strait opposite the island of Ceylon, which later came to refer to the area of the Coromandel coast. Shokoohy's (1991, 31) study argues that Ma'bari was an independent Islamic kingdom in the maritime region in South India, in modern Madura in Tamil Nadu. The Sultanate of Ma'bari, also called Ma'bar, was established in the fourteenth century and lasted less than fifty years, before it was superseded by the kingdom of Vijayanagar.

Yet, the kingdom had strong roots and had relied on Muslim merchants settled in South India. In addition to the architecture of its buildings, we can also see the influence of Muslims in commercial goods. Shokoohy (1991, 32) asserts that Ma'bari appeared to host goods from the western world, mainly horses from the islands of Persian Gulf, to be exchanged for Chinese merchandise, which was transported to the ports of Ma'bar. The horse trade was so important for the kingdom that associated merchants became influential in local politics. Malik Taqī al-

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Dīn, the brother of leading Persian horse trader Malik Jamāl al-Dīn, was appointed as a minister in the kingdom and governor of three ports.

With such a crucial position, Ma'bari since the thirteenth century became popular among Muslim merchants, including those who travelled to the east of *al-Hind* in the Archipelago. Presumably, news regarding Ma'bari evolved into a story on which basis the associated sections of the *Hikayat* were written. As such, the story of Shaykh Isma'il who stopped at Ma'bari during his voyage to Southeast Asia should be understood as highlighting a part of the route used by Muslim merchants travelling to the region. The Ma'bari kingdom was in the center of an established trade network which included commercial areas in the Middle East, India and Southeast Asia. The *Hikayat* affirms the network, as it places South India (the coast of Coromandel) as part of the long movement of Muslim people, along with the Islamic ideas and practices, from the Arab world to Samudra Pasai in Sumatra.

In fact, the term Ma'bari also appeared in a fourteenth century grave in Tuban, East Java. The grave belonged to a Muslim bearing the name Sirāj al-Dīn 'Īsī ibn Ṣalāh al-Dīn al-Ma'barī, who died on 26 Rabi'ul Awwal 782 Hijri (7 July 1380).[7] Of course, nothing is known about this person, except the fact that his last name strongly indicates that he came from the Ma'bari kingdom. Of importance here is that the Tuban grave, which has become a site of religious pilgrimage for Muslims (*ziyarah*), affirms the Islamizing effects of the trade network between the Archipelago and the Indian Ocean. Sirāj al-Dīn was quite possibly a Muslim trader who came to Tuban as its leader (*pate*) – the grandfather of Pate Vira whom Tome Pires met in the early sixteenth century (Pires 1944, 191; de Graaf and Pigeaud 1985, 165-69) – converted to Islam.

Islam in the Global Network

The global trade network served as a key driver for religious change among the people of Malay archipelago. This can be explained from the perspective of "long-distance trade", where the movement of people in the Indian Ocean occurred not only in commerce, but also in the formation of culture and civilization (Chaudhuri 1985). Thus, building upon the maritime routes pioneered by Arab Muslims in the seventh century—as attested by the archaeological evidence from the Bongal site—Indian Muslims, by the thirteenth century, had entered and subsequently asserted dominance over the global trading network.

In doing so, they emerged as principal agents in the Islamization of Southeast Asia.

In fact, the leading role played by Indian Muslims resulted in the emergence of a school of thought which traced the Islamic traditions of modern Indonesia and Malaysia back to Muslim regions in the Indian Ocean, namely Gujarat, Bengal and Coromandel. These regions have been seen as the origin points from where Islam was introduced to Southeast Asia.[8] With due regard to the contributions of the scholars of Arab-oriented perspectives (al-Attas 1969), it should be noted that the Indian Ocean, in which the "Arab speaking Mediterranean" existed, played a crucial role in providing Arab-based Islam with bridging points, facilitated by scholars-*cum*-traders, prior to its arrival in the Malay-archipelago.

In light of the above, the *Hikayat* narrates that Shaykh Isma'il was accompanied on his journey to the east by a guide from Ma'bari called Fakir, symbolizing that both Middle East and Indian scholars worked together to Islamize the ruler and the people of Samudra Pasai. This same perspective is also present in the understanding of Merah Silu's conversion to Islam. The *Hikayat*, like other classical texts of the archipelago (Jones 1979, 129-57), recounts Merah Silu's conversion in a mythical experience of dream. Merah Silu is described as having a dream in which he met the Prophet Muhammad who asked him to recite the words of the profession of faith; the Prophet then said to Merah Silu, "your name shall be Malik al-Salih; now you are a Muslim" (Jones 2013, 21). Yet, if we look at carefully the narrative of the *Hikayat*, it suggests that the text recognizes the crucial role of Fakir from Ma'bari. He took Merah Silu's religious conversion further, as can be seen in the story which outlines that he instructed Merah Silu in Islamic precepts based on the Qur'an (Jones 2013, 23).

This story affirms the data from an inscription on a gravestone found in the Samudra Pasai area in Sumatra, which displays the name of Malik al-Salih, the first Muslim ruler of Samudra Pasai, and notes the year of his death in 1297. Not only does the inscription establish the time when Samudra Pasai became an Islamic kingdom, but it also indicates an Islamic network between Samudra Pasai and an apparent bridging point in the Indian Ocean. J.P. Moquette (1912), a scholar who studied the Pasai inscription, found similarities with inscriptions in Gujarat, leading him, and other scholars, to come to the conclusion

that Islam in the Malay archipelago had its roots in Gujarat. Although some scholars such as Marrison (1951) have subsequently revised Moquette's opinion, this has not altered the long-accepted view that the Indian Ocean played an essential role in the early development of Islam in Southeast Asia. As such, the story of Shaykh Isma'il and Fakir who sailed to the east, as narrated in the *Hikayat*, reflects the Islamic global network of the period.

After a long journey, so the story in the *Hikayat* goes, Shaykh Isma'il arrived at Teluk Teria, where he was informed, with the help of Fakir who spoke to a local fisherman, that this city was Samudra and the ruler was Merah Silu with the title Malik al-Salih (Jones 2013, 22-3). Afterwards, both made their way to the capital to find Sultan Malik al-Salih. Shaykh Isma'il came into the presence of the Sultan and said, "O Sultan, recite the two statements of the profession of the faith". The Sultan recited them, saying "I testify that there is no God but God, alone with no companion, and I testify that Muhammad is His servant and His Apostle". The next day Fakir arrived, bringing all thirty sections of the Qur'an and he proffered the Holy Book to the Sultan who accepted it with no reverence (Jones 2013, 23).

Shaykh Isma'il then directed his Islamizing mission to the ruling elites and the subjects of Samudra Pasai. All social classes and groups—"great and small, old and young, male and female"—were ordered to gather and were then instructed by Shaykh Isma'il to recite the profession of faith. Like Malik al-Salih, "the whole population willingly recited the two statements of the profession of the faith, in all sincerity and with true belief in their hearts" (Jones 2013, 24). With this, Shaykh Isma'il accomplished his duty to convert the people of Samudra Pasai to Islam. From that moment on, so the *Hikayat* emphasizes, Samudra Pasai was acknowledged as a kingdom with a Muslim ruler and subjects. Moreover, the kingdom was named "*Darulsalam*" (the abode of peace), with the explanation that the people had strong spirit "to endure the rite of becoming Muslims" (Jones 2013, 24).

It is worth noting that Jones correctly uses the term *Darulsalam*, instead of *dar al-Islam* as is found in Hill (1960, 119). Looking carefully at the *Hikayat*, the narrative of the text should not to viewed in ideological sense, that it sets the land and the people apart from the rest of the world that is defined in the opposite term *dar al-harb* or the abode of war (Lewis 1988, 73). Furthermore, their conversion to Islam

is not to be understood as "a conscious repudiation of a past identified as evil" (Reid 1993b, 152). No such perception and understanding existed in the *Hikayat*. Instead, the text described the inhabitants of Samudra Pasai as welcoming the coming of new era, that they became part of the global Islamic network with economic and political advantages.

Thus, alongside his religious mission, Shaykh Isma'il also bore the regalia of royalty (*perkakas alat kerajaan*) as he entered Samudra Pasai, displaying that he sought to strengthen the newly-founded kingdom and new ruler. In Malay political tradition, regalia affirms that a ruler wields sovereignty over their subjects (Milner 1982, 82). The *Hikayat* describes how regalia from Mecca was established as part of a royal ceremony to install the ruler. Before the chiefs and the people, the *Hikayat* relates, "the Sultan donned his robs of state, a gift from Makkah, for now he was to be installed by the ritual beating of drum". While mentioning *nobat Ibrahim Khalil*—a festival to honor the respected Ibrahim the special Friend of God, in this context to pay homage the ruler (Hill 1960, 179; Wilkinson 1931, 83-4) —the *Hikayat* depicts the royal ceremony as follows:

> The court heralds stood holding the royal sword, and the officers of state bore their respective insignia. The instalment drum was beaten and the band struck up. A royal salute was fired. Then the whole company of chiefs and people did homage, saying as they bowed in obeisance "O King, Lord of the Realm, God's Shadow on Earth (*zill Allah fi al-'alam*), may live forever". When the Sultan had been installed, the chief sat out in front, each according to his rank, before their ruler (Jones 2013, 24-5).

With this royal ceremony, Malik al-Salih was installed as a ruler with legitimate political, economic and religious power, which enabled him to lay a strong foundation for the development the kingdom. At the time he was inaugurated, Malik al-Salih appointed two principal chiefs (*orang besar*) to assist him in managing the kingdom: Tun Seri Kaya and Tun Bapak Kaya. In line with the new trend of Islamizing Samudra Pasai, these two principal chiefs received new Islamic names of, respectively, Sayyid Ali Ghiatuddin and Sayyid Semayamuddin (Jones (2013, 25). They served as leading elite figures and played crucial roles in the kingdom. Shaykh Isma'il, who symbolized the global Islamic network, greatly contributed to Malik al-Salih's ability to consolidate power, which in turn enabled Samudra Pasai to become a leading kingdom in fourteenth century Malay-Archipelago.

After staying in Samudra Pasai for some time to further his Islamization

mission, Shaykh Isma'il eventually informed Malik al-Salih that he planned to leave the kingdom for Mecca. The *Hikayat* relates that the Sultan—besides gathering the presents as mentioned above— prayed to receive the blessing of God, the Prophet Muhammad and the Caliph. Then, Shaykh Isma'il boarded his ship and set sail, but Fakir remained behind to continue the Islamization process in Samudra Pasai (Jones 2013, 25).

Ruler and Islam

It is worth examining the relationship between the rulers and the religion they converted to, Islam. It may be argued that their conversion initiated an enduring process of Islamization, rather than representing a transient fashion or the ephemeral religious interest of rulers.

In this regard, it is important to understand the *Hikayat*'s story of Samudra Pasai's conversion. As already outlined, the text strongly emphasizes the ruler's conversion occurred at a time when Islam was already accepted by the Malay subjects; the ruler and the subjects were already familiar with Islam before they converted. Therefore, the ruler's conversion highlighted the success of the long-running Islamization process, attaining what Wertheim (1959, 286) referred to as "the princely court" after having already spread in the urban communities of trading centers.[9] The ruler's conversion here symbolized the changing religious and political environment and fulfilled their expected political role over their subjects who converted to Islam.

However, this conversion did not lead disruptions in religious and socio-political life. Practices that existed among the people before the coming of Islam were maintained and redesigned under the new spirituality and values. This should be understood alongside the fact that Islamization proceeded in the domain of kingship, the home of traditional culture and worldviews. Islam was endorsed by the converted ruler and therefore, to quote Milner (1983, 30), "occurred in the idiom of *raja*ship". Islam appears to have been integrated into the existing political system that focused on the ruler (*raja*), not "through the usurpation of the throne, or through the establishment of an Islamic state by foreigners on Indonesian soil" (Jones 1979, 158). Instead, Islam contributed to enhancing the political notion of omnipotent rulers. And the subjects followed their rulers, including in religious belief.

This ruler-oriented picture was a dominant feature in the accounts of conversion in the *Hikayat* and other Malay texts of the period. In the *Sejarah Melayu*, the converted ruler of Malacca, Sultan Muhammad Shah, is credited with playing a key role in the acceptance of Islam by his subjects. This occurred after the arrival to Malaka of Shaykh 'Adul 'Aziz from Mecca. In addition to the Bendahara and the chiefs, the ruler commanded every citizen of Malacca, whether high- or low-born, to embrace Islam (Wisntedt 1938, 84; Borwn 1970, 44). The same description aligns with the accounts of Tome Pires (1944, 242), who wrote of the Malaccan ruler, Iskandar Shah, "not only did he himself turn Moor, but also in the course of time he made all his people do the same".

The prominent position of the rulers is further underscored by the text's association of their conversion with direct instruction from the Prophet Muhammad. As described above, the *Hikayat* narrates that the Prophet Muhammad, through a dream, instructed the ruler to convert to Islam. In the political sense, this served as a strong indication of the ruler's religiosity, to the extent that the ruler was recognized as holding legitimate authority. The association with the Prophet's instruction enabled the ruler to claim that he was religiously-sanctioned to wield power in the kingdom, and to secure their position both as the leader of a political community and a propagator of Islam.

In addition to the ruler-oriented frameworks, we also need to consider other aspects of the religious conversions taking place. Given the burgeoning global Islamic network, economics was also a factor in conversions. The story of Malik al-Salih in the *Hikayat* illustrates the way that maritime commerce grew at the time when Islam began to gain local acceptance. Presumably, the people of Samudra Pasai enjoyed economic advantages resulting from this changing situation. This development was also related to the kingdom's increasing involvement in long-distance trade, which featured merchants from Muslim countries. Supported by the availability of local products, as the above story of Shaykh Islma'il from Mecca demonstrated, Muslim merchants arrived and made business transactions in the region's kingdoms, which drove the economic development of local communities.

As an example, the *Hikayat* relates the story of a trading ship from the land of Kalinga in South India, which arrived in Samudra Pasai with a man on board who could detect vapors of gold. Hearing this news, Malik al-Salih ordered the man to be summoned to meet him.

After the Sultan spoke with the man, he asked the man to "go and fetch the gold from the place where these vapors are". The man from Kalinga, with the support of Sultan's troops, eventually reached the location and "found gold in great quantities, as much as five mines could have yielded. [The gold] was brought to the Sultan who was very pleased to get so much gold" (Jones 2013, 32-3). In this way, the kingdom came to have access to a source of revenue of which none of its inhabitants had known previously. In the *Hikayat*, Malik al-Salih is said to have distributed gold as one of the royal presents. After marrying Princess Genggang of Perlak, he "gave presents of fine clothing to his chiefs. To the poor and needy of the city, he distributed alms, pieces of gold and silver" (Jones 2013, 31).

The above illustrates the ways the global Islamic network helped develop kingdoms in Southeast Asia. Besides being Islamized, with the coming of Shaykh Isma'il and Sayyid 'Abd al-Aziz to Samudra Pasai and Malacca respectively, ruling elites and their subjects enjoyed economic prosperity. While Fakir of Ma'bari stayed in Samudra Pasai to continue propagating Islam, Muslim merchants also made an equal contribution through their trading activities, resulting in the kingdoms becoming both prosperous and religious (Pires 1944, 142).

Prosperous and Religious

As has been noted above, the intertwining of prosperity and religiosity represented a central concern in the Malay Archipelago during this period, offering an explanation for why the process of Islamization produced such significant socio-political impacts. Subsequent to converting to Islam, the Malay rulers and the people of the areas engaged in the global network, in which the growth of trade and the proselytization of Islam formed salient features. These developments continued to evolve, constituting the core of the historical dynamics that shaped the kingdoms of the region.

The aforementioned discovery of gold in Samudra Pasai, as recounted in the *Hikayat*, can be understood from the perspective of prosperity within the kingdom. Gold provided a source of wealth for the kingdom and the rulers, as well as the people. The *Hikayat* notes that the ruler, Sultan Malik al-Salih, distributed pieces of gold to the needy (Jones 2013, 31). The travel accounts of Ibn Battuta, who visited the kingdom in the early fourteenth century, appeared to provide a positive picture of

the economic life of the kingdom (Gibb 1994 [IV]: 876). Ibn Battuta also mentioned products from the kingdom that were in high demand on the international market: incense, camphor, some cloves and some Indian aloe. Several of these products are also cited in the *Hikayat* as being presented to Shaykh Ismail. Ibn Battuta relayed details about all of these products, highlighting his in-depth knowledge about them (Gibb (1994, 880-2).

It should be noted that gold was used in transactions in northern Sumatera, where Samudra Pasai was located. At the end of the thirteenth century, as the travel accounts of Marco Polo confirm, Fansur Camphor was "sold by weight for the same amount of the fine gold" (Moule and Pelliot (1976, 376). Odoric of Pordenone made similar observations in the early fourteenth century. In addition to noting plentiful produce in the markets, he also said that "gold and tin are found in great abundance" (Yule 1913, 150). Several decades later, Ibn Battuta arrived at the same view. As he landed in Sumatera (al-Jawa) and entered the capital city of Samudra Pasai, he saw "the people buy and sell with little piece of tin or unrefined Chinese gold" (Gibb 1994, 876). The use of gold as a medium of exchange highlights that Samudra Pasai at the time experienced rapid economic progress, where trade transactions grew alongside the arrival of products and merchants to the kingdom. This use of gold not only elevated Samudra Pasai to a dominant position compared to other kingdoms, replicating the success of Javanese overlords in the tenth century (Wicks 1992, 13), it was also a sign of the prosperity of its people.

Samudra Pasai was the first kingdom in the archipelago to issue Islamic coinage in the early fourteenth century. Sultan Muhammad (1297-1326), the second ruler of Samudra Pasai, was the first to establish the currency, which came to called *derham*, in the kingdom. The front side of the coin featured his title Malik al-Zahir (The Victorious King), while writing on the back read 'Sultan al-'Adil'. This coinage appeared to serve as the model for currency in Samudra Pasai from that point onwards. Sultan Muhammad's title as 'Malik al-Zahir', together with the term 'Sultan al-'Adil', were used by future rulers of the kingdom until its fall to the Portuguese in 1521 (Alfian 1979, 15-27). The coins were made of gold, which was abundant in Samudra Pasai at the time, and their circulation presumably had a strong foundation in the development of commerce of the kingdom. This gold coinage carried

special meaning in this respect; beside marking a new development in the economic history of Malay-archipelago, it also signaled the rise of the northern area of Sumatera as a leading economic power in the fourteenth century (Wicks 1992, 235).

The rulers and the people of Samudra Pasai also contributed to this development. They had a cosmopolitan outlook, welcoming foreigners, merchants and religious elites. Ibn Battuta wrote that the Sultan, having been informed of his arrival, "ordered the amir Daulasa to come to meet me with the noble qadi Amir Sayyid of Shiraz and Taj al-Din of Isfahan and other jurists. As their last names reveal, the two nobles might come from Muslim countries who were recruited with the task of managing the socio-religious affairs of the kingdom, including international relation. Further Ibn Battuta notes that they came out accordingly and brought a horse from the Sultan's stables and other horses. I and my companions mounted and we entered the Sultan's capital, the city of Samudra (Sumutra), a fine, big city with wooden walls and towers" (Gibb (1994, 876). A similar account of the kingdom's people could also be found. "When we reached the harbour", Ibn Battuta stated, "the people came out to us in little boats bringing coconuts, bananas, mangoes and fish. It is their custom to make a present of these to the merchants" Gibb (1994, 876).

Thus, it can be said that Samudra Pasai represented what Kathirithamby-Wells (1986b, 333-47) referred to as an "Islamic city" of the pre-colonial Malay-archipelago. In this city, not only was economic development based almost completely on maritime commerce, but it was also characterized by the concentration of political nobles, religious elites, and a merchant aristocracy in the vicinity of the court and the administrative center. They constituted the substantial elements for the working system of governance in the kingdoms (Kathirithamby-Wells (1986b, 340); Reid (1980, 247). In the Malay kingdoms, the royal palaces were surrounded both by the economic elites (the *orang kaya*), and the religious elites, the *kadi* and the *'ulamā'* (Muslim scholars, sing. *'ālim*). They, especially the latter elites, were happy to serve the rulers as patrons of learning (Wolters (1970, 175; Reid 1979, 399).

Ibn Battuta provides us with information on the way religious elites, in particular, formed an important component in the established courtly system. The ruler, Sultan Malik al-Zahir (Malik al-Tahir according to the *Hikayat*), had a strong focus on encouraging religiosity among the

ruling elite and the people. Besides being "of the noblest and most generous kings", the Sultan was renowned for his desire to be close to the *'ulamā'*. Not long after he arrived in Samudra Pasai, Ibn Battuta came to be informed that the ruler, Sultan Malik al-Zahir, was "a Shafi'i in *madhhab*, and a lover of jurists, who came to his audiences for the recitation of the Qur'an and for discussion" (Gibb (1994, 876-7). The Sultan's interest in learning was obvious on the day Ibn Battuta met him. After waiting for three days, in accordance with the custom for newcomers in the kingdom, Ibn Battuta wrote:

> On the fourth day, which was a Friday, the amir Daulasa came to me and said: 'You will greet the Sultan in the *maqsura* of the mosque after prayers'. I came to the mosque and prayed the Friday prayer with the chamberlain, Qayran. Then I went to the Sultan. I found the qadi Amir Sayyid and the men of learning on his right and left. He gave me his hand, I greeted him, and he made me sit on his left. He asked me about Sultan Muhammad and my travels. I replied. He then resumed the discussion on jurisprudence according to the Shafi'i *madhhab*. This lasted until afternoon prayer. (Gibb 1994, 878).

Aligning with the idea of the "Islamic city", the Sultan appeared to be very supportive of the *'ulamā'*, providing them with facilities for learning and appointing them to senior positions in the kingdom. In court ceremonies, the *'ulamā'* were always present as one of the groups of elites who escorted the ruler, next to the Wazir, the amirs, the secretaries, the officers of state and the army commander. In an account of the Sultan's movements between his home and the mosque and the greeting ceremony, Ibn Battuta noticed that all the elites were arranged in ranks in the audience hall. The Wazir and the secretaries were first in line to greet the Sultan, then the amirs. Then, wrote Ibn Battuta, came the *'ulamā'* with the positions as the sharifs, the jurists, and "his personal favorites, the scholars and the poet", only then followed by the army commanders, then the pages and the mamluks" (Gibb (1994, 879).

Based on this depiction, the *'ulamā'* presumably had a strong influence on the Sultan. With his unassuming style – walking to Friday prayers on foot – he had strong religious spirit, concomitant with economic interest, as "he often fights against and raids the infidels". The people of the kingdom shared this characteristic. Ibn Battuta described them as having eagerness "to fight infidels and readily go on campaign with him. They dominate the neighbouring infidels who pay *jizya* to have peace" (Gibb (1994, 877). This paints a similar picture to

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the one relayed in the *Hikayat*: that the people of Samudra Pasai were strongly committed to the Islamic faith (Jones 2013, 24). Hence, it is no wonder that the Portuguese traveler Tome Pires (1944, 240-2) ascribed the conversion of the Malaccan ruler, Iskandar Shah, to the advice of the ruler of Samudra Pasai and the *'ulamā'*.

Samudra Pasai was even acknowledged as a center of Islamic learning, amidst the rise of Malacca as the leading entrepôt and kingdom in the Malay-archipelago. In the *Sejarah Melayu* (Malay Annals), this was illustrated in the story of the arrival of an *'ālim*, Maulana Abu Bakar, who brought with him the book *Durr al-Manzum*.[10] Having disembarked and proceeding to Malacca, he was received with the utmost respect by the ruler, Sultan Manshur Shah, who was eager to study the contents of the book with the *'ālim*. Afterwards, so the *Sejarah Melayu* relates, the Sultan issued an order to send the *Durr al-Manzum* to Samudra Pasai, "for an exposition of its doctrine by Tuan Pematakan". In addition, Sultan Manshur Shah also sent Tun Bija Wangsa to Samudra Pasai to pose a question of theology: "Do those in heaven abide there forever? And do those in hell abide forever?", to which the ruler asked Tun Makdum Mua to "furnish the answer to this question, that we may not be put to shame" (Winstedt 1938, 127; Brown 1970, 92-3).

These stories in the *Sejarah Melayu* suggest an ongoing role for Samudra Pasai as a center for religious knowledge, with *'ulamā'* occupying prominent positions under the ruler. According to the stories mentioned, both Tuan Pematakan and Tun Makhdum Mula demonstrated their capabilities as *'ulamā'*. Tuan Pematakan worked on the exposition of *Durr al-Manzum* and Tun Makhdum Mula provided Tuan Bija Wangsa with the answer to the question he posed. Sultan Mansur Shah, with the approval of Maulana Abu Bakar, was pleased with the exposition and the answer of the *'ulamā'*. This contributed to the position of Samudra Pasai as an esteemed centre of Islamic learning in the Malay-archipelago.

Closing Remarks

As we can see, there is ample evidence that the *Hikayat* has strong historical significance in understanding the globalized Malay kingdom of Samudra Pasai in the fourteenth century. Discussion of the global Islamic network makes up a significant part of the narrative of the text and contributed to the dynamics leading the Malay people to

becoming part of Muslim-dominated long-distance trade in the Indian Ocean. The people of Samudra Pasai not only practiced an Islamic lifestyle, including adhering to religious beliefs, but they also gained economic advantages. On this point, the *Hikayat* offers compelling evidence that engagement in expanding commercial activities brought about encounters with Muslim merchants, which in turn fostered both economic prosperity and the cultivation of religious piety. Within this framework, the *Hikayat* articulates a Malay perception of the past in which there is clear openness to global currents, with such ideas depicted as enriching and elevating local society and culture.

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Endnotes

1. Of several editions of this text, the one by Russel Jones will be consulted. He was the scholar who worked on this text, making new revised transliteration (1999) and English translation (2013) to the version by Hill (1960). See also Jones (1980, 167-71).
2. See for instances Hall (1981, 221-22) and Vlekke (1959, 67). This opinion differs from the travel accounts of Marco Polo, in which Perlak (*Ferlec*), another region in northern Sumatera, had already converted to Islam in 1292, before Samudra Pasai in 1297 (Polo (1903 [2], 284). The alleged year for the conversion of Samudra Pasai, 1297, is based on the date of the gravestone of Malik al-Salih, the first ruler. For a critical discussion on this theory of Islamization, see Hill (1963, 6-21); Kenneth R. Hall (1979, 213-231)
3. See also Jones (2013, xxvii), who is of the opinion, in reference to the arguments by Guillot and Klaus (2008), that the text was written between 1428 and 1488.
4. Hall mentions that Southeast Asian peppers was regarded as of lower grade than those produced in along the Indian Malabar coast, but they were cheaper and more directly available to the Chinese.
5. These findings, like coinage of the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties, are based on the archaeological excavation in Bongal site in the west coast of Sumatra. For the discussions on this subject, see Eri Soedewo *at.al*. (2023) "Fanshur: Bandar Perdagangan Penting Samudra Hindia di Pantai Barat Sumatra Abd VII – X Masehi" (unpublished research report).
6. Jones (2013, 19) reads and transliterates this as "Mengiri", differing from Hill (1960, 55-56) who understands it as "Ma'bari". Based on the reading of the manuscript preserved in British Library (0r. 14350), as well as other sources of Indian Ocean studies, especially the one of Shokoohy (1991), I would argue that Ma'bari is the right word for the name for the kingdom in South India. In this respect, I would like to say thanks to Annabel T. Gallop who provided me with access to the manuscript of *Hikayat Raja Pasai*.
7. The initial information on this grave is from the report of Mapesa Aceh with title "Dari Koromandel, India, ke Tuban, Indonesia", 14 September 2024, which is available online (Dari Koromandel, India, ke Tuban, Indonesia).
8. See for instances Marrsion (1951); Fatimi (1963), Hall (1964), Schrieke (1955), Vlekke (1959), Winstedt (1917), Kern (1956), Moquette (1912), and Snouck Hurgronje (1913).
9. See also Schrieke (1955 [2], 230-1); Milner (2023).
10. In the Shellabear version of the Malay Annlas, *Durr al-Manzum* is a Sufi work written by an 'alim in Mecca, Maulana Abu Ishak. When the book was finished, he asked his student, Maulana Abu Bakar, to study the book under his guidance, and then to disseminate its message to the kingdom of Malacca in the lands below the winds (Shellabear 1987, 114-8). See also Overbeck (1933, 254-60).

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Studia Islamika, published three times a year since 1994, is a bilingual (English and Arabic), peer-reviewed journal, and specializes in Indonesian Islamic studies in particular and Southeast Asian Islamic studies in general. The aim is to provide readers with a better understanding of Indonesia and Southeast Asia's Muslim history and present developments through the publication of articles, research reports, and book reviews.

The journal invites scholars and experts working in all disciplines in the humanities and social sciences pertaining to Islam or Muslim societies. Articles should be original, research-based, unpublished and not under review for possible publication in other journals. All submitted papers are subject to review of the editors, editorial board, and blind reviewers. Submissions that violate our guidelines on formatting or length will be rejected without review.

Articles should be written in American English between approximately 10.000-15.000 words including text, all tables and figures, notes, references, and appendices intended for publication. All submission must include 150 words abstract and 5 keywords. Quotations, passages, and words in local or foreign languages should

be translated into English. *Studia Islamika* accepts only electronic submissions. All manuscripts should be sent in Ms. Word to: http://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/studia-islamika.

All notes must appear in the text as citations. A citation usually requires only the last name of the author(s), year of publication, and (sometimes) page numbers. For example: (Hefner 2009a, 45; Geertz 1966, 114). Explanatory footnotes may be included but should not be used for simple citations. All works cited must appear in the reference list at the end of the article. In matter of bibliographical style, *Studia Islamika* follows the American Political Science Association (APSA) manual style, such as below:

1. Hefner, Robert. 2009a. "Introduction: The Political Cultures of Islamic Education in Southeast Asia," in *Making Modern Muslims: The Politics of Islamic Education in Southeast Asia*, ed. Robert Hefner, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
2. Booth, Anne. 1988. "Living Standards and the Distribution of Income in Colonial Indonesia: A Review of the Evidence." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 19(2): 310–34.
3. Feener, Michael R., and Mark E. Cammack, eds. 2007. *Islamic Law in Contemporary Indonesia: Ideas and Institutions*. Cambridge: Islamic Legal Studies Program.
4. Wahid, Din. 2014. *Nurturing Salafi Manhaj: A Study of Salafi Pesantrens in Contemporary Indonesia*. PhD dissertation. Utrecht University.
5. Utriza, Ayang. 2008. "Mencari Model Kerukunan Antaragama." *Kompas*. March 19: 59.
6. Ms. *Undhang-Undhang Banten*, L.Or.5598, Leiden University.
7. Interview with K.H. Sahal Mahfudz, Kajen, Pati, June 11th, 2007.

Arabic romanization should be written as follows:

Letters: *'*, *b*, *t*, *th*, *j*, *ḥ*, *kh*, *d*, *dh*, *r*, *z*, *s*, *sh*, *ṣ*, *ḍ*, *ṭ*, *ẓ*, *'*, *gh*, *f*, *q*, *l*, *m*, *n*, *h*, *w*, *y*. Short vowels: *a*, *i*, *u*. long vowels: *ā*, ī, ū. Diphthongs: *aw*, *ay*. *Tā marbūṭā*: *t*. Article: *al-*. For detail information on Arabic Romanization, please refer the transliteration system of the Library of Congress (LC) Guidelines.

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