

## Localizing India's Values of Ramayana in Southeast Asia- The Case of Hikayat Seri Rama

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### **Abstract**

*Intercultural communication is the communication among different cultures, different communities with different lifestyles and worldviews, which is a dispensable and unavoidable trend. The Ramayana is one of the largest ancient epics in world literature and has had an important influence on later Sanskrit poetry and Hindu life and culture because it presents the teachings of ancient Hindu sages in narrative allegory, interspersing philosophical and ethical elements. The characters Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, Bharata, Hanuman and Ravana are all fundamental to the cultural consciousness of India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and south-east Asian countries such as Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia and Indonesia. There are many versions of the Ramayana in Indian languages, besides Buddhist, Sikh and Jain adaptations; and also Cambodian, Indonesian, Filipino, Thai, Lao, Burmese and Malaysian versions of the tale. The paper analyzes the characteristics on receiving Indian culture in the case of Seri Rama - the Malay literary adaptation of the Hindu Ramayana epic in the form of a hikayat such as the receiving methods, principles in selecting, acquiring and localizing Indian cultural values.*

**Keywords:** *Ramayana, Principles, Localizing, Hikayat Seri Rama*

## INTRODUCTION

### Some Indian Influences on South East Asia

Influences from India as a driving force, the basic components for cultural identity in Southeast Asia are no longer skeptical. The ways to acculturate those influences in Southeast Asia will hardly be a matter of debate anymore. The majority of researchers do not even argue that Southeast Asia had received only a passive influence, don't regard the civilizations of this region as only "moonlight" or "satellite" civilizations belonging to the "Greater India" or "India Expansion" (Further India) anymore. They have increasingly agreed that thanks to the interaction with India through trade routes by sea, Southeast Asian residents have reflected the finest draw in Indian culture that they find beneficial to their culture and that is cultural synthesis rather than the "amplitude" of Indianization. However, the influences from India contributing to the formation of the basic elements of culture in Southeast Asia perhaps still requires further research.

The term "Southeast Asia" in the sense mentioned to be an area officially emerged from World War II. This region includes many countries with environmental diversity as well as race.

*In term of race (cultural entities), living in Southeast Asia is South Mongoloid race with the division into 5 groups (according to Nguyen Tan Dac 2005)*

Austro-Asiatic

Austronesian

Indonesian

Vedoid

Negrito

*Consequently, in terms of language, in Southeast Asia, there are 5 groups (according to Nguyen Tan Dac 2005):*

Austro-Asiatic (Mon-Khmer)

Austronesian (Malayo-Polynesian)

Tai-Kadai

Tibeto-Burman

Hmong-Mien

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From the environment (cultural space), this area includes the Mainland Southeast Asia and Maritime Southeast Asia. The division of the mainland - island differences reflects not only geographically, but in some respects culturally.

**Table 1: The division of Mainland Southeast Asia - Maritime Southeast Asia**  
(According to Nguyen Tan Dac 2005, Mai Ngoc Chu 1998)

|                         | Mainland Southeast Asia                                       | Modern Southeast Asia   |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Countries               | - Myanmar<br>- Thailand<br>- Campuchia<br>- Laos<br>- Vietnam | - Malaysia<br>- Singapore<br>- Indonesia<br>- East Timor<br>- Philippines<br>- Brunei |
| Natural Geography       | - Besides the mountain is quite vast plains                   | - The narrower plains<br>- The more affluent forests                                  |
| Economy                 | Mainly Agriculture  | Expanding operations at sea in which maritime trade is important                      |
| The formation of states | The unified states were established early                     | The united states is relatively later established                                     |

*From a historical view (cultural time)*, generally on the entire region, we can say there are three main periods:

Period of the local culture (from the beginning to the early BC);

The period to acculturate the Oriental cultural influences from China, India, Arab

(from about the first century BC to XVI);

The period to acculturate the influences of Western culture (from the XVI century until now).

However, the pace and content of each period are very different among the sub-regions within South East Asia. We can distinguish five sub-regions as follows:

Cambodia, Champa: quickly acquired Indian cultural influence, initially as Brahmanism, Buddhism later.

Indonesia, Malaysia: The impact of India (Buddhism, Brahmanism) introduced early, but from the fourteenth century onwards gradually replaced with Islamic influences.

Myanmar, Thailand, Laos: later reception in Indian influences and through intermediary countries, with Buddhist profound.

Philippines: The Impact of India faded, profoundly influenced Christianity, besides Islamic being affected in the south.

Vietnam: Early receiving Indian influences (the influence of Buddhism in Luy Lau, influential Brahmanism and Buddhism in Champa, Funan) and is the only country in Southeast Asia influenced Chinese identity (in the north after century II, in the south after the fall of the kingdom of Champa in the XV century).

Despite all this diversifying differences, Southeast Asia has increasingly been seen deeply as a united region in geography, socio-politics and culture. Southeast Asian identity so that should be considered from point of view as a region with the "unity in diversity", unity is cultivated throughout the historical periods: on the indigenous foundation as well as two layers of imported acculturation.

For the formation of the classical culture of Southeast Asia, it is clear that the most important cultural acculturation obtained through the interaction with India.

## Ramayana Hallmarks on Cultural Values of Southeast Asia

Buddhism and Hinduism went into Southeast Asia, in-depth level of popularity, mainly through the myths, tales, epics, fables such as Jataka, Mahabharata, Ramayana, and the Panchatantra ... or lively form of storytelling (storytellers, comic embroidery ...), festivals, visual arts (sculpture, painting ...), performing arts (puppet theater, dance masks ...). In this part, we can just mention about the hallmarks that Ramayana has carved on Southeast Asian cultures.

**Table 2: The Ramayana versions in Southeast Asian countries**

|             | Ramayana   |
|-------------|--|
| Myanmar     | -Yama Zatdaw (century XVIII)                                       |
| Campuchia   | - Reamker (century VI)   |
| Thailand    | -Ramakien (century XIII)   |
| Laos        | -Phra Lak Phra Lam (century XIX)<br>-Gvay Dvorahbi                 |
| Champa      | -Ramayana  |
| Vietnam     | - "Angered King" (Lingnan Chich Quai)                              |
| Indonesia   | -Ramayana Kakawin, Seri Rama (century VIII-IX)                     |
| Malaysia    | -Hikayat Seri Rama (century XIII-XVII)<br>-Hikayat Maharaja Ravana |
| Philippines | -Manaraw   |

**Table 3: Ramayana through forms of storytelling, festivals, visual art and performing arts in Southeast Asia**

|           | Ramayana   |
|-----------|--|
| Myanmar   | - Story-telling<br>- 01 temple<br>- Shadow puppet theater<br>- Court dance drama   |
| Campuchia | - Story-telling<br>- Reliefs at Angkor Wat<br>- 193 paintings in monasteries in Phnom Penh<br>- <i>La Kon</i> stage<br>- Court dance   |
| Thailand  | - Story-telling<br>- 02 temples<br>- 200 murals at Wat Phra Kaeo (Bangkok)<br>- <i>Nang Yai</i> wayang<br>- <i>Kohn</i> mask dance   |
| Laos      | - Story-telling<br>- 02 temples<br>- 29 murals at Vat Oup Moun (Vientiane)<br>- Dance<br>- Music   |
| Vietnam   | - Temple for Valmiki<br>- <i>Dià kél</i> stage of Khmer  |
| Indonesia | - Story-telling<br>- 05 temples<br>- Reliefs in Hindu Temple<br>- Shadow puppet theater <i>Wayang Kulit</i> & <i>Wayang Purwa</i><br>- <i>Kecak</i> dance<br>- Mask dance<br>- Jack shadow<br>- Ballet<br>- Mochopat, Bebachan festivals |
| Malaysia  | - Story-telling<br>- 1001 pictures and statues in the biggest temple for Rama<br>- Shadow puppet theater <i>Wayang Kulit</i>   |

Though *Ramayana* has got great influences on Southeast Asian cultures, this paper mainly focuses on *Hikayat Seri Rama*, a variant of Indian *Ramayana*. *Ramayana* was already well known in Java by the end of the ninth century is evident from the magnificent series of reliefs carved into the walls of the temples of Prambanan in central Java around 900 AD. However, the first literary version in Old Javanese, the *Ramayana Kakawin*, appears to date from a century later. It is based not directly on Valmiki's *Ramayana* but on a later Indian poetical version, the so-called *Bhattikavya*, a Sanskrit poem written by Bhatti (6/7th century), which both tell the story and illustrate the rules of Sanskrit grammar. The first five cantos are a fairly exact translation, while the remainder is a much freer version.

With the spread of Islam across Java from the fifteenth century onwards, the strongly Indianised Old Javanese culture and traditions retreated eastwards to the island of Bali, which today remains the only majority Hindu region outside India. Nearly all Old Javanese literary compositions or *kakawin* survived only in Bali, although their stories continued to be known in Java through the shadow-puppet tradition. The late 18th-century renaissance of literature at the central Javanese courts of Surakarta and Yogyakarta saw the rewriting of the *Ramayana Kakawin* in modern Javanese. In Bali, the story of Rama still plays a central part in the religious and cultural life of the island, and in the twentieth century became a popular subject for illustrated palm-leaf manuscripts.

In the Malay Muslim courts of the archipelago, literary traditions now transmitted using Arabic script continued to reflect deep-seated Hindu-Buddhist roots. The Malay version of the *Ramayana*, *Hikayat Seri Rama*, is believed to have been committed to writing between the 13th and 15th centuries. One of the oldest Malay manuscripts in this country – and probably the oldest known illuminated Malay manuscript – is a copy of the *Hikayat Seri Rama* now held in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, which was in the possession of Archbishop Laud in 1635. The Malay version originated not from the classical *Ramayana* of Valmiki, but from popular oral versions widely spread over southern India.

### ***Hikayat Seri Rama* - Malay Localized Text**

#### **The Issue of Various *Seri Rama* Texts**

The early Islamized states of Indonesia produced not only new dynasties and empires, but also a rich cultural heritage. Some of this heritage was truly new, insofar as it was inspired by Islam, but much of it had roots in pre-Islamic culture as well. Most of the Malay literature before 1550AD are *Hikayat* ("tales") that could be prose stories, epics, or historical chronicles - and often a mix. It is appropriate to regard this heritage as classical, in the sense that it provided authoritative cultural standards and frames of reference for the pre-twentieth-century civilizations of Indonesia. Among the works belonging to this heritage, *Seri Rama* is a precious treasure.

The current *Seri Rama - Hikayat Seri Rama (Chronicle Of The Great Rama)* comes to us in the form of 16th - 18th century manuscripts, collected and contrasted into a book of eight volumes. These manuscripts, although quite sticking together, do not quite match. In 1843, Dutch scientist Roorda von Aysinga published one of these manuscripts. In 1917, Salabert, a British missionary, published another manuscript. These manuscripts did not include all the parts like Balai Pustaka's *Hikayat Seri Rama* published in Indonesia's capital Jakarta (1953). For example, Salabert's version consists of most of the passages related to the youth of the demon Ravana while the writings of Roorda von Aysinga are more elaborate about Rama and his wife Sita. In general, the manuscript used to make the publication of Roorda von Aysinga's work clearer, more complete and better than the one Salabert used.

*Seri Rama* of Publishing house Balai Pustaka is a compilation based on the manuscript of Roorda von Aysinga, but has been supplemented by Salabert's publication. As such, it may be the most completed serial of *Seri Rama*. This does not entirely mean that there are no currently oral stories about *Seri Rama*. For example, in 1986, the English scientist Macxwell published a paper titled *The Dalang (Penglipur Lara)* introducing a manuscript by the famous storyteller Miahasan in Malaysia. This is another version of *Seri Rama* that existed until that time.

It can be said that the various texts of *Ramayana* in Indonesia were compiled from the legacies of the ancient Javanese culture, not the medieval or modern Indonesian cultural heritages. The scientist Van Der Chuk proved it by comparing the content of these texts with the selection of common nouns and proper nouns of the ancient Javanese. In our opinion, his conclusions coincide with historical facts: long after the Indian period, it is unlikely to find people in Indonesia and Malaysia who would and could translate works that were lost the reputation in public by Islam.

Since 1846, Auguste Dozon demonstrated that *Seri Rama* is a truly independent work based on the *Ramayana* storyline, but reflects the spirit and plight of Indonesia. On the contrary, Sizenit and Stout Sergeyi tended to assume that *Seri Rama* is completely imported from India, though it differs from Valmiki's *Ramayana*. They argued that besides *Ramayana* by Valmiki and *Ramayana* of Tulsidas, there are other folk tales circulating in Indonesia that have similar plots in India (North India, Bengal, South India) among other Southeast Asian peoples.

In their opinion, these texts are certainly interdependent, so the differences between *Ramayana* and *Seri Rama* can be explained. Sizenit and Stout Sergeyi saw many plots in *Seri Rama* did not match Valmiki's *Ramayana* but were found in the *Ramayana* epic in Bengal of India. That proves that no matter what, the Indonesians also import these epics from India.

However, religious prejudice has frequently left Indonesians and Malaysians oblivious to the enduring legends of India in their culture. In the middle of the fifteenth century, the story of *Ramayana* was so popular in the Malacca Peninsula that when playing with little friends of the same age, Hang Atuk (an Islamic Sultan) remembered the name of Rama's brother, Laksmana. . So he was named after Laksmana. When he became a Sultan (the word for the king of Islamic countries), he kept the nickname in the title.

Not many people know that the classic *Seri Rama Story* has come to us through two editions. A copy published in 1843 by Roodca Ravan Aysinga, the other of Senlaberd, was the basis for the catalog of Lotha's publications, which were kept in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, England since 1963 as above-mentioned. The fullest and most completed story is from the Royal Society of London Library. There is another - not studied, stored at the General Department of Indian Affairs.

*Seri Rama* is a Malay work and at the same time, it is also a continuation of the *Ramayana* Indian epic. Just as the Brahmin religion, Buddhism or Islam coming to Indonesia was transplanted into indigenous cultural background, *Ramayana* was also transplanted into *Hikayat Pandi*, wayang, God and ancestor worshipping.

### **Many Characters in Seri Rama Have Different Background from Those in Ramayana**

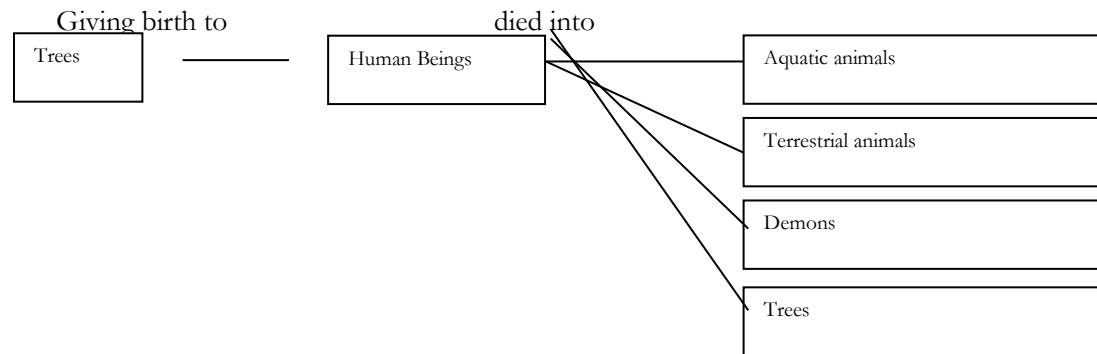
*Hikayat Seri Rama* is the Malay literary adaptation of the Hindu *Ramayana* epic in the form of a hikayat. The main story remains the same as the original Sanskrit version but some aspects of it were modified to a local context such as the spelling and pronunciation of names. Numerous branch stories had also been developed as accretions to or extensions of this epic with the upgrading of minor characters to major ones, or the invention of totally new characters. For example, Malay writers and storytellers have produced variations in which Laksmana (Lakshman) plays a larger role, sometimes becoming more important than Rama - the elder prince - much like the Lao *Phra Lak Phra Lam*. Rama, although righteous and virtuous, was perceived to be weak and his character is often moved to the background while the younger Laksmana is admired for his courage and willingness to react decisively.

The *Seri Rama* is based on the details available in folk tales in Indonesia and Malaysia combined with the original plots of the Indian *Ramayana* epic. There are two main folk legends based on *Ramayana* in Indonesia. The first was inspired by the play-scripts of ancient folk tales still in existence in Java. It first appeared in the Majapahit era and was then brought to Malaysia, Thailand and Cambodia. In this folktale, Shiva is named Gaphera Mahasiku. Becoming a monk in disguise, seeking redeeming sins in his previous lives, he raised a sparrow beard and tried to keep the life-sustaining elements from failing to give birth. He has a wife carved out of sandalwood. She gave birth to a daughter but later betrayed her husband, giving birth to three sons with the sun god, moon

god and monkey king. Angry, Shiva immediately turned her into eucalyptus and turned her children into monkeys like Hanuman. In the end, the gods redeemed human faces for the boys.

In the second version, we see that all the main characters in the *Seri Rama* are born under unusual conditions. The god Vishnu made the wife of King Dasarata Maharaja born of a yellow bamboo tree as a sign of the birth of a new good world. *Seri Rama* and his wife Sita are born because his mother or father eating a miraculous feast of rice that priests have practiced.

The detail that Mandu Dari is born from the bamboo is a very interesting and reflects the indigenous features of Southeast Asia. Most peoples in this region have myths about their own human origins in the minds of the primitive. According to Indonesian conception, humans were born after Earth. Once the trees enveloped the Earth, the two souls of a man and a woman came down from the trees. And from these two man and woman, all humans were born. Here, the man from the tree goes down, from the tree comes out. Another legend about the origin of coconut trees in Indonesia is that the coconut tree comes from the head of a dead man buried in a tree. In Filipino and Malaysian mythology, the first human was born from bamboo. Meanwhile, some other ethnic groups in Southeast Asia such as Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia ... there are myths that people born from gourd. We can summarize the above concept in the following diagram:



**Table 5. Circle of life between human beings and trees (source: self - made by the author)**

Thus, for most people in Southeast Asia, humans are of plant origin. This is a very common thought of the ancients about the origin of man. It was because the ancients found the image of eternal life in the trees - a friend who was very close to their life. For Southeast Asian people, the idea of human origins from these plants is closely linked to the agricultural civilization (especially wet rice cultivation) that is the oldest in Southeast Asia. From the incidents in the Indian epic that come from an exotic area of thoughts, the people of Southeast Asia in general and the Indonesians in particular have created the necessary transformations to turn them into closer works with his own mind. Sita's origins are much different from her origins in *Ramayana*. Even in the variants of *Ramayana* in India, the origin of Sita was very different. In the *Banmíc Ravan*, it is said that Sita was the adopted daughter of King Mitkhid Janaka. Once, the king went to plow the field to build the altar, from the furrow, a beautiful young woman stood up to receive the king and the king accepted her as his daughter, Sita Borozda. In Valmiki's *Ramayana*, Sita is the daughter of the goddess Lakshmi, consort of Vishnu - the seventh incarnation in Rama. But in the folk variations also in India, the same pedigree of Sita is absolutely not recognized. In these stories, Sita has always been the mundane daughter of the king Janaka.

In *Seri Rama* - Sita is also Rama's sister but in addition, she is also Ravana's daughter.

In *Seri Rama*, King Dasaratha found in the golden bamboo bush the beautiful girl Mandu Dari and took her as his wife. With Mandu Dari, the king had two sons, Rama and Laksmana (and two other sons, Baxarath and Satrugokhapa with Balia, the second wife). Once Ravana disguised as a Brahmin monk, appeared in the palace of King Dasaratha and asked the king to give Mandu Dari to him. To show hospitality, King Dasaratha intended to satisfy Ravana's request. But Mandu Dari secretly used the dirt on her body to create a girl

exactly like her and Ravana took that girl to his kingdom. Soon, King Dasaratha took the form of a baby to the island and entered the room. Then Mandu Dari - the girl - gave birth to a daughter with King Dasaratha. The prophet predicts that the future husband of this daughter will kill Ravana and be the lord of the world. At first, Ravana was about to kill her daughter, but at Mandu Dari's request, he only locked the baby in an iron box and threw it into the sea. Thanks to the magic, the ark did not sink and floated to the shore just as King Maharaja was bathing. The king accepts her as a daughter, named her Sita, and declares that anyone who uses a bow to shoot an arrow that pierces 40 palm trees in a row in front of Sita's palace will be married to her.

### **The Details in Seri Rama Have Closer and More “Logical” Sense of Ordinary Life to the Locals**

It seems that the Indonesians find that the incidents in *Ramayana* are sometimes too great to make the story unbelievable, alien to ordinary people. Therefore, when referring to these facts, they have been transformed in some way to bring about persuasion. Balia Dara (Kakeyi's Indonesian name) did not save the king in the battle with her strange magic but simply prevented the king from falling and thus broke her arm. The king returned to the palace, sat facing the Rajas, the ministers, generals, eunuchs messengers and the entire people. He said:

“I am almost in the face of the humiliation of the queen because of the broken sedan. Fortunately, Balia Dara quickly grabbed its arms and she broke her arm. Her loyalty to me is great. Therefore, the child I will have with her, whether he is a boy or a girl, will also be the king (Raja) of this city”.

The story of the golden bamboo that gave birth to Rama's mother was not present in *Ramayana* but it carries the traces of folk beliefs of animism. Or the plot the generals decide that Rama does not match the throne is different from the detail when Kakeyi demanded the throne for her child in *Ramayana* by Valmiki.

The reconciliation of the *Ramayana* variants with the new adaptations from India reveals similarities between the Indonesian and Bengali versions. This leads us to doubt the old theory asserting that it is the Sanskrit form of many Sanskrit names that speak of the purely Tamil origin of the *Ramayana* scripts in Indonesia. After examining these variants, researcher Winstedt concludes that both classical Indonesian texts circulated to this day are derived from oral traditions in the Indonesian archipelago, which attracts every motif though. It can reach east, west, south west, sub-continental India. Facts such as Rama's relationship with Vishnu, emphasizing Lakshmana's asceticism, and the occurrence of Sita, Ravana's image... indicate that ancient oral form was formed after the twelfth century - when these plots first appeared in the compiled versions in India. The non-Indian elements are many, but it does not preclude the development of the Indian storyline.

### **Seri Rama Reflects a Lot of Details About the Customs and Culture of the Indonesian People**

The story of *Seri Rama* reflects many ethnographic details in the Indonesian life, such as the description of the wedding ceremony. Traditionally, weddings start with the bride's parents or the guardians who will not permit to sleep for days. The absence of this many days of sleep aims to a long wedding ceremony and probably because of hot weather during the day in Indonesia, the wedding party is held only at night.

"Up to the good time, Kali Maharesi permitted to start the feast. In fifteen days and nights, the sound of music spread. All the Maharesis and the inhabitants of the city of Darjevachi Purva enjoyed the banquet”.

The wedding ceremony itself consists of young couples traveling around the city with the appropriate procession. And at the wedding reception, both husband and wife have to sit behind the table for the mother of the bride herself to feed the couple like babies! This practice proves to be the remnant of the matriarchy, which is the procedure for the groom to transfer to his wife's clan in Indonesia. Then, people use seven curtains to cover the bride and groom. The wedding couple has done the conjugal rite for a while and can eat a little. All of this can be found in *Seri Rama*.

"People brought the royal rice out. The empress herself fed the bride and groom. After eating rice, people ate betel. Then, the yellow curtain hung. Seri Rama and Princess Sita Devi sat down and enjoyed the fun together".

The Indonesian love of music is also reflected in this story. The role of music in life is a characteristic of Indonesians. For them, love of music is something immense for life, without music there would probably not be a New Year, there would be no festival. In Indonesia, important family events can hardly be carried out without music.

*Seri Rama* also reflects the complex marriage relationship in Indonesia and Malaysia with matriarchy. Relationships in *Seri Rama* are very troublesome. Hanuman, for example, turns out to have two mothers: a biological mother is Sita, another mother spawns Devianjani too. The relationship between Prince Seri Rama and Princess Sita is even more complex: Dasarata Mahajara, the father of Seri Rama, was very close to Queen Mandu Dari, who used to be Tosagan's previous wife. So who were the daughter of this queen would be the sister of Rama. Moreover, if Sita were Tosagan's daughter, she would be demonic because Tosagan is the demon king, and if Tosagan wants to marry Sita, he would marry his own daughter!!! However, that crime is not intentional because Tosagan doesn't know that Sita is his daughter. In Indonesia during ancient times, daughters followed the mother's blood, and marriages in the same blood between brothers and sisters could be made without incest. So in Indonesia's view, the marriage between Seri Rama and Sita did not make Indonesians angry but Tosagan's attempt to take Sita caused them disgusted because it was a violation of the laws of many primitive tribes. Under that rule, spouses must be of the same generation, not of different generations like Tosagan and Sita. In general, for most ethnic groups, incest for upper and lower generations is a violation. Indians allowed people of different generations to marry. Thus, the details differing from *Ramayana* on the complex relationship between Sita and Seri Rama and Tosagan (Ravana) may be considered to be merely unintentional mistakes due to ignorance by the Indonesians. But under the pressure of the listeners, storytellers - *zhalangs* also have to express their attitude by condemning Ravana more harshly and more sympathetically to Rama as a sign of respect the custom of the nation.

In *Seri Rama* also contains other pure Indonesian traits. For example, the close relationship between humans and animals when animals also can give birth to humans. This motif is generally extremely popular in folk tales in Indonesia. In the *Ramayana* of India, there are no such complicated situations. Sita is simply the adopted daughter of the neighboring king or, in other words, she is born from the furrows as the daughter of the goddess of the earth.

The betel nut diet is also repeated several times in *Seri Rama*:

"After dinner, everyone chewed betel and smelled its good taste for pleasure"

### **The Spiritual Depth in Seri Rama Has Also Changed**

It is very strange that although Islam entered Indonesia in the 13th century, it is very little reflected in *Seri Rama*. The only mention of Allah in some places, though it may be Islam itself or, more correctly, the idea of a single god leading to the person who decides primarily the fate of the story is always there. To be mentioned is the great glory god named Dvatamunia Raya.

If *Ramayana* reflects the spirit of Hinduism in India, then the complete religious philosophy of India in *Seri Rama* goes back to the Indonesian foundation with its ancient ancestral worship and belongs to the very ancient pagan worship. In *Seri Rama*, the Great God - especially when embodied as the ancestor of the clan, is the grandfather of the royal family. This perfectly meets the views of the people always consider their ancestors to be divine. For example, in *Seri Rama*, the mother of Seri Rama is actually the soul of the tree (here is the bamboo). Ancestor worship and animism existed in primitive Southeast Asian peoples. In *Seri Rama*, we can see the presence of this kind of belief in Indonesians.

In general, the concepts of animism appearing all *Seri Rama*. Seri Rama's arrows are always alive. In the story, Seri Rama together with the prophets and fairies makes the flower bushes or the grass turn into human souls.



“Once Rama thought, “There are three people here. Anything that happened to Sita Devi should be taken care of. If we were sick, who would be Sita Devi's friend? The truth is that there is Laksmana but he is a man. We should pray to the great God to give Sita Devi a girlfriend.” The next day, early in the morning, Laksmana went looking for a flower, alfalfa and fruit from the foot of the mountain of Indra Pavanam. Laksmana split the grass and flowers into twelve bunches and placed them in front of Seri Rama. Seri Rama raised his offering, chanted the Veda, invoked the great God of glory, and spoke of all he pleaded. Suddenly the clusters of grass and flowers turned into twelve people, seven girls, five men; the gorgeous young girls looked only about fourteen years old. Then, Rama finished the prayer. Seri Rama split two men into friends with Laksmana and Sita Devi was happy with the rest of seven friends”.

In both *Seri Rama* and *Ramayana*, Ravana calls for his relatives, brothers, and children to help him fight Rama. But in *Seri Rama*, there are the alien images of Hinduism like the image of the Buddha. Because of the anger contained in Ravana himself, the Buddha took him in a sealed container, buried deep in the ground, and even caught a gold lid in his eyes as his gaze burned every day what he looked.

Thus, *Seri Rama* was able to use the theme of Indian epics that remained throughout the spirit and worldview of the Indonesians.

### **Localizing *Ramayana* into *Hikayat Seri Rama* by Indonesians – Some Conclusions**

Through the above analysis, we can draw some principles of the *Ramayana* localizing process in Indonesia.

#### **Regarding The *Ramayana* Localizing Ways**

##### **The *Ramayana* Epic Was Localized Mostly Through the Role of Narrative Folk Transmission**

The storytellers- Dalangs play a special and great role in spreading and transforming the epic *Ramayana* in Southeast Asia in general and Indonesia in particular. This is an oral tradition in the most common language. In other words, works can be selected, even edited, to attract more audiences. It is the narrator who actively contributes to the process of reconstructing foreign works by adding, modifying and adjusting them to the context and spirit of the nation. This is the first step in the formation of new variants. One of the most important localizing routes of Southeast Asian culture in general and Indonesia in particular is the folklorisation of outside works in narration. That's why *Seri Rama* originated from *Ramayana* but absolutely not a translation.

##### **The Means For One Literature to Enter Another Is Firstly Translating.**

The translations have brought to the national literature a new source of themes, alien characters and new forms that can be learnt from. Certainly, translations can have an impact on the development of indigenous literature by enriching the compositional tendency, the literary theme, the ideological content, etc.

Many translators not only translate purely but also adapt the original art and content to suit the aesthetic tastes and customs of the country. Sometimes, there are works that have inspired the translators so much that they can use the material of the work in hand to produce new works. This is the highest step in the dissolution of exotic works in general and in the case of India's *Ramayana* in particular into the national literary cultures as it has in Southeast Asia.

##### **Indigenous Art Forms Contribute to The *Ramayana* Localization.**

From an exotic work, Southeast Asian artisans can transform and blend their original works with local narrative and mythological motifs. Over the generations, when printed into books, exotic works could become a national story of their own.

## **After The Process of Disseminating and Dissolving into Folk, It Is a Process of Convergence at A Higher Level.**

After a long history of dispersing and transforming in all aspects, exotic works may have a whole new look. At some point, the work is so localized that it becomes a new national work, with artistic accomplishments no less important than the original as we compare *Seri Rama* with *Ramayana* today.

### **In Principle of Selection, Acquisition and Localization**

#### **Indonesians did not accept all foreign factors but only those suitable with the local culture**

They accepted some foreign cultural factors and spread them over. The people chose what they recognized was suitable with them. For example, India had two great epics *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* but almost every country in Southeast Asia in general and Indonesia in particular accepted *Ramayana* because it is easier to retell, to understand, to modify and apply to the reality.

#### **They Accepted the System of Thoughts, Religions and Philosophy but Rearranged Those in Other Value Ladder to Make It Appropriate with Their Moral and Social Traditions**

The cultural values of India proposed a very high position for man in *Manu Law*-178-179 article but because the real situations in Indonesia (such as in ancient kingdoms, there used to be some Queens in Pajapahit time; the role of women during the ancient time in Java, Bali... was fairly high) were very different, there were some changes. Another example is the image of Buddha at the end of the story as mentioned above.

#### **They Accepted and Modified the New Formations and Ideas of Foreign Culture to Express the Values of Local Cultures**

*Using the system of foreign written languages create their own scripts and using the abstract vocabulary of the Indian language to describe and make clear their philosophical thoughts, to enrich their own languages...*

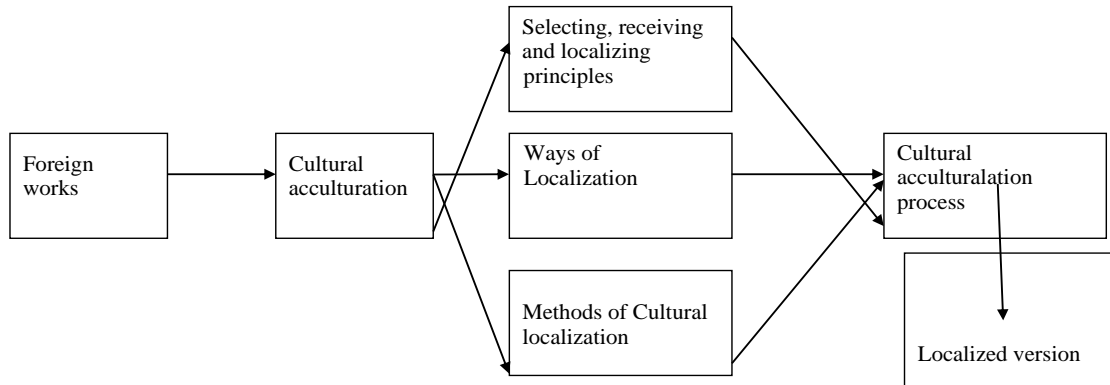
*Thanks to contacting with Indian civilization, they could create many cultural and religious master-pieces which have very high values and even the Indian and other foreign scholars and researchers have to express their admiration to such as Thakur Upendra-India; Berna Solang Thierry, George Groslier-France talked about the literary works based on *Ramayana*; Majumdar-India talked about Cambodian tombstones; Maretin-Russia talked about Javanese culture.*

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**Table 6. GRAPH OF CULTURAL ACCULTURATION (source: self - made by the author)**



**Table 7. THE WAY TO LOCALIZE INDIAN RAMAYANA IN INDONESIAN SERI RAMA (source: self - made by the author)**

