

# 1 Introduction

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Beginning in the late seventeenth century and throughout the eighteenth, the Dutch United East India Company (VOC) used the island of Ceylon as a site of banishment for those considered rebels in the regions under Company control in the Indonesian Archipelago, many of whom were members of royal lineages. Convicts and slaves from these territories were also sent to Ceylon, as were native troops who served in the Company's army. After their takeover of the island in 1796, the British, too, brought to Ceylon colonial subjects from the archipelago and the Malay Peninsula, primarily to serve in their military. It is from these early political exiles and the accompanying retinues, soldiers, servants, convicts and slaves that the community of the Sri Lankan Malays developed, with its cohesiveness based, above all, on an ongoing adherence to the Muslim faith and the Malay language.

The previous paragraph has briefly introduced a group now referred to as the "Sri Lankan Malays." And yet the history of this designation is neither simple nor straightforward, regarding both place ("Sri Lanka") and people ("Malay"), and as a result nomenclature has emerged as a methodological and theoretical theme in this book, its exploration bringing to the fore a set of questions about understandings of space, temporality, stories and belonging. I raise it here, at the very start, because it is impossible to refrain from naming the place, people and culture I write about, yet also untenable to qualify what is written at every turn. In considering exile, diaspora and the literary culture they fostered, place is clearly a central theme. But what constitutes "a place"?

The island to which Javanese princes, and many other members of royal families from across the Indonesian Archipelago, were sent by the VOC in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries possessed several names: Sarandib, Lanka, Ceylon. How, I ask in this book, do the different – perhaps distinct, overlapping or competing – names of a place shape the ways in which that place is imagined, and the way its histories are told and retold across space, time and literary cultures? Furthermore, I consider how these different imaginings in turn come to shape

experiences and affiliations. The island's names, I propose, were not mere interchangeable designations. Rather, they represented different traditions, histories and attachments that fostered understandings of, and approaches to, exile and diaspora in lived experience. I will suggest that nomenclature determines place and its imaginings no less than do its physical and spatial dimensions.

Different religious and literary traditions attached different names to the Indian Ocean island off India's southeastern coast. What exile-related echoes did these names – Sarandib, Lanka and Ceylon – carry, especially for a diasporic community? Sarandib, the old name employed by the Arabs for the island, was the spot where according to Muslim tradition Adam, the first man and first prophet, fell to earth upon his banishment from Paradise, a tradition that was known and retold across South and Southeast Asia. Exiles and their descendants engaged with this exilic geography, one that implied that they were not only banished individuals but also returnees to a primordial sacred site. Lanka, the fabulous demon kingdom in the Ramayana, was also a site of banishment, where Sita was forcibly taken by Ravana, far from her husband Rama, his kingdom and his subjects. The Ramayana was widely known in the archipelago, where its story was recast in stone, expressed through dance and theater, and written down in a range of genres, and it would have been intimately familiar to Javanese exiles. Ceylon, the name employed by successive European rulers of the island, was closely associated with exile in the colonial period. To consider if and how these nomenclatures were linked is to ask whether these were parallel, synonymous or perhaps competing nomenclatures for a single place or, possibly, names that were employed for what their users believed to be distinct sites rather than a shared location. Far from constituting a technicality or a marginal scholarly quibble, this is a query that can help assess whether the different exile narratives of Adam, Sita and the eighteenth-century banished were, or could have been, linked in people's imagination and lives.

The question of nomenclature extends beyond place also to the people whose history and writing traditions are at the heart of this study. The ancestors of today's Sri Lankan community came from diverse backgrounds with many being of Javanese or east Indonesian ancestry. A portion of the political exiles in the late seventeenth century, and especially throughout the eighteenth, were members of ruling families in their homelands. For example, the Javanese king Amangkurat III of Mataram was exiled along with his retinue in 1708 after a bitter struggle over the throne with his uncle, the future Pakubuwana I; the twenty-sixth king of Gowa in south Sulawesi, Sultan Fakhruddin, was exiled in



Figure 1.1 Detail showing Sarandib from al-Idrisī's 1154 world map, as reconstructed by Konrad Miller in 1927.

1767 on charges of conspiring with the British to oppose the VOC trading monopoly in eastern Indonesia.<sup>1</sup> Also exiled during the eighteenth century were, among others, the prince of Bantam, the crown prince of Tidore and the king of Kupang. Another important figure exiled by the Dutch even earlier (1684) was Sheikh Yusuf of Makassar, a leader, religious scholar and “saint” from Sulawesi. Such prominent figures had followers who joined them in exile and often also established a local following in Ceylon. Some of the banished eventually returned to

<sup>1</sup> Mataram was the central Javanese dynasty that rose to power in the sixteenth century. It reached its heyday under Sultan Agung (r. 1613–1646), who established hegemony over central and east Java. Although in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the Mataram kingdom increasingly lost power and territory to the Dutch East India Company and split gradually into several smaller courts, their rulers were all descended from a single family. On the sultan of Gowa and his family's life in Ceylon, see Suryadi, “Sepucuk Surat dari Seorang Bangsawan Gowa di Tanah Pembuangan (Ceylon),” *Wacana: Jurnal Ilmu Pengetahuan Budaya*, 10.2 (2008): 214–245.

their places of origin. Thus, for example, after the aforementioned King Amangkurat III's death in Ceylon, following almost thirty years of exile, his descendants and servants were repatriated in 1734 to Java, where the king's body was reinterred in the royal cemetery at Imogiri. Many others, however, stayed and lived out their lives in Ceylon, either by choice or deprived of any alternative.

Not only did early arrivals from the archipelago to Ceylon come from different islands and regions and, as a consequence, speak multiple tongues: Their religious affiliation was also not monolithic, as can be glimpsed occasionally in archival records. A Dutch document from 1691, for example, noted that "widows of Amboin soldiers would be provided with small pensions provided they are Christians."<sup>2</sup> There is evidence that certain exiles, convicts or soldiers, accepted Christianity and that some later reverted to Islam.<sup>3</sup> The references to Balinese and Ambonese soldiers in Dutch service, although not explicitly discussing religion, suggest that there were Hindus and Christians among the larger group.

How did a group possessing such diverse ethnic, linguistic, and religious pasts come to be masked by the unifying terms "Malay" and (in Sinhala and Tamil) "Ja," the two most common appellations used today? Both "Malay" and "Javanese" are, to a certain degree, misnomers for a group with such varying ancestry. Using "Indonesian," a more accurate term in today's context in terms of describing their country of origin, would be anachronistic, and it is, consequently, a designation that carries little attachment. My point, however, is not to assess the "correctness" of a particular name but to raise questions about this shifting nomenclature, its imposition from without and adoption from within during different periods, and its relationship to a sense of belonging and place.

The appellations used to identify the Sri Lankan community have changed over time. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Dutch referred to the group as the "Easterners" (D. *Oosterlingen*), another blanket term, like "Malay," that did not hint at the diversity of their home regions.<sup>4</sup> This tendency may have reflected the fact that many of the "Easterners" had lived in Batavia (to the east of Ceylon) before coming to Ceylon and so may have developed a sense of community and

<sup>2</sup> SLNA 1/23, Political Council Minutes, July 18, 1691.

<sup>3</sup> *Jubilee Book of the Malay Cricket Club* (Colombo: Ceylon Malay Cricket Club, 1924), 158–159.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, SLNA 1/73, Political Council Minutes, August 30, 1736.

shared identity that reflected that experience rather than their individual, geographically diverse backgrounds. However, the designation “Javanese” (D. *Javaans*) was also used in some Dutch sources and could suggest that Javanese people formed a majority within the community in its formative stages or again that, with many coming from Batavia (situated on Java), it indicated their site of departure to Ceylon.<sup>5</sup> Yet many sources contained a broader range of appellations for people originating in the Indonesian Archipelago, including “Balinese,” “Makassarese,” “Madurese,” “Javanese,” “Ambonese,” “Buginese” and others. In his 1672 account of life in Ceylon, the Dutch reverend Philippus Baldaeus depicted in great detail many of the battles between the Portuguese and the Dutch, and repeatedly mentioned various categories of soldiers fighting on both sides, among them the Javanese and Bandanese.<sup>6</sup> In the customary document that Librecht Hooreman, outgoing commander of Jaffna, wrote in 1748 for his successor Jacob de Jong, outlining developments during his tenure and challenges for the future, he mentioned two particular individuals: “Lastly, I mention here that two persons are confined to this Castle as Prisoners of State viz. Bantams Pangerang [Prince] Diepa Coesoema and the Madura Prince Radin Tomogon Rana Diningrat. The followers of the former consist of three men and three women and that of the latter two men and two women.”<sup>7</sup> Specific sites were indicated in this passage: Bantam (Banten) in west Java and the island of Madura.

Such depictions raise questions about the almost complete disappearance of languages of the Indonesian Archipelago other than Malay from the extant written records. It is true that Malay was a lingua franca of trade and Islamic culture, widely known in Southeast Asia for several centuries, certainly along the coasts. Yet the islands known as Indonesia today were, and still are, among the world’s most linguistically diverse

<sup>5</sup> B. A. Hussainmiya, *Lost Cousins: The Malays of Sri Lanka* (Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1987), 55–57.

<sup>6</sup> Phillipus [sic] Baldaeus (originally published 1672), translated from Dutch by Pieter Brohier, “Phillipus Baldaeus: A True and Exact Description of the Great Island of Ceylon,” *Ceylon Historical Journal* 8.1–4 (1958–1959): 1–403. For mention of Javanese soldiers see, for example, 147, 225, 226, 279; for soldiers from Banda see 147, 162, 225.

<sup>7</sup> For the Dutch original and an English translation, see *Memoir of Librecht Hooreman commander of Jaffna 1748 for his successor Jacob de Jong*, translated and edited by K. D. Paranavitana (Colombo: Department of National Archives, Sri Lanka, 2009), 74. The information contained in such passages has historical significance that goes beyond the nomenclature question. Ranadiningrat, the Madurese prince mentioned by Hooreman, was the son of Cakradiningrat IV, the king of Madura who was exiled to the Cape, while his sons Ranadiningrat and Sasradiningrat were exiled to Ceylon; see Zainalfattah, *Sedjarah Tjaranja Pemerintahan di Daerah-daerah di Kepulauan Madura dengan Hubungannya* (Pamekasan: Paragon, 1951), 154.

regions and the early arrivals to Ceylon must have spoken a wide range of tongues. As will be shown, some traces of the earlier diversity do remain, with the links to Java, although not immediately apparent, closer to the surface of Malay texts than those to other parts of the archipelago, perhaps because of the high percentage of Javanese among the early exiles, their elevated status and a long-standing written Javanese literary tradition whose products could be transmitted to new surroundings. The very term used for writing Malay in Sri Lanka, employing a modified form of the Arabic script that is known across Southeast Asia as *jawi*, is a Javanese one: *gundul*.<sup>8</sup> However, mention in Malay manuscripts of Makassar, Sumenep, Aceh and additional places shows clearly that sites beyond Java were significant as well.

Other sources, especially letters and petitions written in exile, point to additional, far-flung places across the Indonesian–Malay world to which those classified as Malays felt a connection and allegiance, and to which they often wished to return. For example, a letter written in 1792 by two brothers, descendants of Sultan Bacan Muhammad Sah al-Din from the island of Bacan in eastern Indonesia, beseeched the Dutch governor and Council in Batavia to allow them to leave Ceylon after having lived there for twelve years.<sup>9</sup>

Based on evidence found in Malay writings and colonial documents preserved in Sri Lanka, it is therefore not obvious that the community would develop an exclusively Malay affiliation. Along with its varied roots and adding to its internal diversity were the Malays' close contacts and frequent intermarriages with the Tamil-Muslim community, the Moors, traces of which are found in many manuscripts.<sup>10</sup> It seems,

<sup>8</sup> The term *gundhul* (“bald”) is used in Java to refer to the Javanese language written in an unvocalized form of the Arabic script (whereas the more common, and vocalized, Arabic script used to write Javanese is known as *pégon*). For an excellent survey of *jawi* across the Malay world, see Annabel Teh Gallop et al., “A *Jawi* Sourcebook for the Study of Malay Palaeography and Orthography,” *Indonesia and the Malay World* 43.125 (2015): 13–171. An example from Ceylon is on 116–117.

<sup>9</sup> Letter, Ceylon to Batavia, 1792, Leiden University Library, MS Cod. Or. 2241-Ia (11).

<sup>10</sup> In this context it is of note that, to the best of my knowledge, no term corresponding to *peranakan* is used at present in Sri Lanka to describe the children born of such marriages. The term, however, was used occasionally in the past to refer to individuals from the archipelago who were of Chinese descent, as evident from Dutch records. See, for example, the request made by *Peranakan* Sinees Jan Lochsien to the court in Galle, to return to Batavia (SLNA 1/173, Political Council Minutes, December 5, 1776). For an example from a Malay text, see Chapter 8. The Moors, like the Malays, have traditionally written their language in the Arabic script (known as *Arabu-Tamil* or *arwi*). I consider the Arabic script, in some ways, as another standardizing cloak, like Malay, that has acted as a unifier that obscures a diversity of languages and backgrounds. On the Moors, see Asiff Hussein, *Sarandib: An Ethnological Study of the Muslims of Sri Lanka* (Dehiwala: Asiff Hussein, 2007), 1–400.

however, that with time a gradual process of moving toward a unifying appellation (as well as an almost complete dominance of the Malay language and a more religiously homogeneous group) took place. If during Dutch times the categories of Easterners and Javanese were dominant (with occasional references to additional subgroups, including Bandanese, Malays and Balinese, among others), under the British the term “Malay” gained prominence, certainly in colonial records. The British categorized the group based first and foremost on their collective language, Malay, but also on the physical similarities they identified between them and the local inhabitants in the newly founded British settlements in Malaya (Penang, 1786) and, later, Singapore (1819). Malays were perceived as possessing features unique unto themselves, as Robert Percival concluded in 1803: “The religion, law, manners and customs of the Malays, as well as their dress, colour and persons, differ very much from those of *all the other inhabitants of Asia*. The Malays of the various islands and settlements also differ among themselves, according to the habits and appearance of the nations among whom they are dispersed. Yet still they are all easily distinguished to be of the Malay race.”<sup>11</sup>

The use of “Malay” certainly became more entrenched with the founding by Governor Frederick North of the Ceylon Rifle Regiment, also known as the Malay Regiment in the early nineteenth century, in which many Malays served and which provided not only employment but also a shared sense of commitment and community.<sup>12</sup> A significant relationship existed between life in the Regiment and Malay literary culture: Members of the Regiment copied classical Malay works and also wrote their own stories and poems, especially in the form of *pantuns* and *syairs*;<sup>13</sup> the literature’s principal promoters and audiences were

<sup>11</sup> Robert Percival, *An Account of the Island of Ceylon: containing its history, geography, natural history, with the manner and customs of its various inhabitants: to which is added, the journal of an embassy to the court of Kandy* (London: C. and R. Baldwin, 1803), 147 (my emphasis).

<sup>12</sup> On the history of the Regiment, see B. A. Hussainmiya, *Orang Rejimen: The Malays of the Ceylon Rifle Regiment* (Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1990).

<sup>13</sup> The relationship between the Regiment and Malay literary culture was first pointed out by Hussainmiya, *Lost Cousins*, 92–94. Pantuns were popular throughout the archipelago, in Malay, Minangkabau, Achenese, Batak, Sunda and Javanese (in which they were known as *parikan* or *wangsalan*). The Malay pantun is a quatrain, with a rhyme scheme of ABAB, and meant to be sung. The genre has been oft-studied, including inquiries about whether there was a semantic connection between the first and second couplets; see Liaw Yock Fang, *A History of Classical Malay Literature*, trans. Razif Bahari and Harry Aveling (Singapore: ISEAS, 2013), 442–445. The syair, among the most popular of genres across Muslim Southeast Asia, is a form of traditional Malay verse, consisting of four-line verses with each line containing four words, i.e. eight to twelve syllables. Its rhyme scheme is AAAA and internal rhyme is common. Heated debates raged among

related, in one way or another, to the Regiment; members of the Regiment conducted lessons for Malay children, ensuring they were literate in Malay written in the jawi script; soldiers who traveled to Malaya and Singapore on assignment served as a bridge between the community in Ceylon and the large Malay centers to the east by guaranteeing a circulation of ideas, texts and people among them.<sup>14</sup> In addition to these significant dimensions of the community's life that came to bear also on language dominance and nomenclature, especially pertinent to further understanding of the adoption of the designation "Malay" is the question of how interactions among colonial administrators and scholars categorizing the peoples of Ceylon and those peoples', in this case the Malays', self-definitions shaped the nomenclature over time. In other words, how did "insider" and "outsider" perceptions interact and impact shifting naming practices and, with them, shifting identities and understandings of the past and the present?<sup>15</sup>

Throughout this book, I have tried to consistently use the "appropriate" place and group names in context so as to convey the force and different memories they carried. For example, Chapter 6 is an investigation of the island and its exilic histories through the prism of "Sarangdib." Because "Sri Lanka" (replacing Ceylon) was adopted as the name of the nation state only in 1972, it is used for the most part when recent references are made, yet the designation "Lanka" is ancient and resonates deeply, as elaborated in Chapter 7 with its focus on the Ramayana. The terminologies used for the wider region can often be anachronistic when considering earlier centuries, or otherwise vague or constructed, and I employ them – the Indian Ocean world, Indonesian Archipelago,

scholars in the twentieth century over the dating of the *syair*'s early appearance as a poetic form in Malay literature with claims ranging from the fourteenth to the eighteenth century; see *ibid.*, 447–449. The most famous *syairs* are likely those composed by Hamzah Fansuri (c. sixteenth century) on mystical themes, but as the genre gained ever wider popularity in the Malay-speaking world it was employed also for writing about nonreligious subjects, including romance and history; see Ismail Hamid, *The Malay Islamic Hikayat* (Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1983), 39. *Syairs* were recited and performed on various occasions and served didactic, religious and political purposes. They became, like the more story-like Malay *hikayats*, almost all-encompassing in the breadth of their themes and perspectives.

<sup>14</sup> See Hussainmiya, *Lost Cousins*, 93–94.

<sup>15</sup> The question of Malay identity has been the topic of heated debates and important scholarship in recent years, although the Sri Lankan Malays often remain unmentioned or are mentioned only briefly in these writings. For critical scholarship on Malayness, see, for example, the contributions in Maznah Mohamad and Syed Muhd Khairudin Aljunied (eds.), *Melayu: The Politics, Poetics and Paradoxes of Malayness* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2011); also Timothy P. Barnard (ed.), *Contesting Malayness: Malay Identity across Boundaries* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2014); Joel Kahn, *Other Malays: Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism in the Modern Malay World* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2006).



Indonesian–Malay world, South Asia and Southeast Asia – at different points where fitting for the sake of clarity and approximation. Ultimately, my underlying assumption, following Doreen Massey’s seminal work, is that space (however it is divided and marked) is the product of interrelations, constituted through interaction, a sphere of “coexisting heterogeneity” that is always in the process of being made and remade.<sup>16</sup> Exploring names – their histories and imaginings – provides one key to understanding this phenomenon.

As the book considers space or place in their varied meanings, so it considers time. Stories can operate in a range of ways, and their alternative forms of temporality have in part guided this endeavor, for which linear chronology seldom provided the model. What this means in practice is that the book’s chapters explore texts from different periods and places to show how a particular exile- or place-related story or trope was imbued with different temporal dimensions, from the cosmic to the contemporary, collapsing time to allow multiple temporalities to coexist, making the story, or its germ, relevant across eras. Integrating sources from different periods in Malay, Arabic and Javanese from Ceylon, Java and elsewhere in single chapters not only challenges the linearity of time and literary transmission but also provides a further example of multiplicity, of open-endedness and continuity, across what are usually seen as distinct spatial categories, opening up “time-spaces” for exploration.<sup>17</sup>

There are several continuums that weave their way through the book which I wish to highlight. One is the continuum between exile and return. If, as I suggest, Adam’s exile from heaven to earth foreshadowed the Malays’ arrival in Sarandib, which constituted for them a form of return to the original site of human banishment, Adam’s plight can offer a paradigm to think about both exiles and returns and how they connect and are intertwined in much of what follows. Sita’s case is relevant, too, as her return from banishment in Lanka turned out ultimately to offer her another form, perhaps more agonizing, of exile. Several prominent eighteenth-century exiles to Ceylon also experienced returns, whether in life or in death. The latter, posthumous homecomings suggest another continuum, that of mobility, which took various forms – some literal, some more imaginative – within diasporic life, including the movement of exiles, soldiers, texts, sacred objects and familiar food. In some cases, not even death, burial and the construction of tombs, often considered places of “final rest,” were indeed conclusive, precluding mobility. Finally, and further in the background, is the broader continuum of exile

<sup>16</sup> Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005), 9.      <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 177–195.

and forced migration as it took shape in colonial Dutch Asia, for which we must consider a vast domain and the movements within it, a domain that now traverses nation-states and continents but was contained within a single imperial realm: exile from one's home region to a city such as Batavia on Java, to Indonesian islands such as Sulawesi or Ternate, across the Indian Ocean to Ceylon, or half a world away to South Africa.<sup>18</sup>

Following stories and imaginings produced in relation to place, time and movement through the prisms of Sarandib, Lanka and Ceylon guides this book. For this purpose I employ a comparative approach which seeks to explore the Sri Lankan Malays' history, literature and perspectives on exile through multiple lenses and from different shores, integrating sources in Malay, Javanese, Arabic, Dutch and English to present the views of colonized and colonizer in the Dutch and British periods, poetic and prose depictions of exile, single texts that move between and across languages, religious traditions relating to Ceylon and documents ranging from letters to family diaries to theological manuals and charms. In this endeavor I build on, and extend, earlier scholarship in which the nomenclatures of the island and the particular textual and imaginative worlds they evoked did not play a major role.

To date, the Sri Lankan Malays have been studied first and foremost by linguists who have found the local variety of Malay to constitute a highly interesting contact language that combines Austronesian, Dravidian and Indo-European elements, due to long-standing ties among speakers of Malay, Tamil and Sinhala.<sup>19</sup> In several other academic fields the Sri Lankan Malays have remained on the margins of scholarship, including in area studies, focusing on both South Asia and Southeast Asia. Sri Lankan Malay writing was produced in a region now referred to as "South Asia." The carriers of Malay to this region converted it, by way of their linguistic, religious and literary practices, into a frontier of Southeast Asian, or Malay-world, Islam. Across the Indian Ocean from the Indonesian Archipelago and on the path to Mecca, Ceylon was not an entirely unknown site, yet still distant and foreign and certainly not part of a (however loosely connected or imagined) shared world of Malay writing practices and literary production. To this day, this physical distance and frontier-like quality are reflected in the

<sup>18</sup> For an introduction to the topic, see Ronit Ricci, "Introduction," in Ronit Ricci (ed.), *Exile in Colonial Asia: Kings, Convicts, Commemoration* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2016), 1–19.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, the contributions in Sebastian Nordhoff (ed.), *The Genesis of Sri Lanka Malay: A Case of Extreme Language Contact* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).



Figure 1.2 Lanka as Ravana's golden palace, c. 1610, artist unknown. The Picture Art Collection/Alamy Stock Photos

almost complete absence of Malay writing produced in Ceylon/Sri Lanka from the foundational books of Malay literary studies that survey Malay literature from a chronological, generic or thematic perspective.<sup>20</sup> More generally, the Malays' literature and community have, to a large extent, been excluded from discussions of the "Malay world" or been mentioned only in passing.<sup>21</sup> In a mirror image of this lack, and reflecting the Malays' peripheral position as a minority with distant roots, local Malays seldom appear significantly in mainstream accounts of Sri Lanka's history.<sup>22</sup>

Interestingly, the near silence surrounding the Sri Lankan Malays extends to historical scholarship produced in Indonesia, whence came the ancestors of today's Malays, and where exilic histories of the colonial period have received little attention in the era of the nation-state. A notable exception is the figure of Sheikh Yusuf of Makassar, the renowned religious and anti-Dutch leader who was exiled to Ceylon in 1684 and then, a decade later, further afield to South Africa. Besides being revered as a powerful saint, he has also received posthumous recognition from both the Indonesian and South African governments.<sup>23</sup> Still, in broader terms, there has been little work produced in Indonesia about the lives and afterlives of colonial exiles, including the royals among them.

Studies of the Sri Lankan Malays' history and culture have thus hitherto been few. Two of them must be acknowledged as foundational, laying the groundwork for further study: B. A. Hussainmiya's *Lost Cousins: The Malays of Sri Lanka*, which introduced the Malays' history and literature on the island, and the same author's *Orang Rejimen: The Malays of the Ceylon Rifle Regiment*, which presented a history of the Malays' service in the British army. These books, based on pioneering research into several private manuscript collections shown to the author in the 1970s, as well as Dutch and British sources, were the first

<sup>20</sup> Examples include Richard O. Windstedt, *A History of Classical Malay Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969); Ismail Hamid, *Kesusasteraan Melayu Lama dari Warisan Peradaban Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Fajar Bakti, 1983); Hendrik M. J. Maier, *We Are Playing Relatives: A Survey of Malay Writing* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2004).

<sup>21</sup> Anthony Milner, *The Malays* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), x, 87–88, 148–149.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, K. M. de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), who mentions the Malays once (p. 225) in his 603 pages; John Clifford Holt (ed.), *The Sri Lanka Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011); Nira Wickramasinghe, *Sri Lanka in the Modern Age: A History* (London: Hurst, 2014). According to the 2012 census the Malays make up approximately 0.2 percent of the population of just over 20 million.

<sup>23</sup> Kerry Ward, *Networks of Empire: Forced Migration in the Dutch East India Company* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1–5.

to raise awareness of a Malay populace in Sri Lanka and its ongoing linguistic and cultural vitality. Several books have been written by members of the Malay community in recent decades, largely drawing on family documents and personal recollections, but also on archival research, among them M. A. Sourjah's *The Sri Lankan Malay Heritage in Brief*,<sup>24</sup> B. G. N. Sariffo'deen's *The Story of My Life*,<sup>25</sup> and Noor Rahim's "Reminiscence of Our Proud Malay Heritage," and his cookbook *Malay Culinary Delights* which states on its cover that it is about "the culinary prowess and expertise of our Malay ancestry, and the types of food they brought along with them from the motherland."<sup>26</sup> Most recently, Tuan M. Zameer Careem's *Persaudaraan: Malay Life in Sri Lanka*, offers an encyclopedic and glorifying account of local Malay history.<sup>27</sup> Occasional articles in the Sri Lankan media have revealed intriguing aspects of Malay history.<sup>28</sup> Several scholarly articles have also appeared outside Sri Lanka, including those by Hamid and Harun Mat Piah, which examined Sri Lanka's Malay literature in the context of the wider world of Malay writing.<sup>29</sup>

Like the island's different names, the diverse archives available for the study of Malay life in colonial Ceylon evoke different voices, images and memories. None is complete, and each offers particular perspectives on events, containing its own revelations and silences. The Department of National Archives of Sri Lanka in Colombo holds a vast collection of Dutch documents, including Lot 1, an archive created by the VOC of the coastal districts of Ceylon from 1640 to 1796, a time when Company possessions in Ceylon were the second-largest territory administered by the Dutch in Asia.<sup>30</sup> The documents offer a mapping of exiles

<sup>24</sup> M. A. Sourjah, *The Sri Lankan Malay Heritage in Brief* (Battaramulla: M. Wazir Sourjah, 2005).

<sup>25</sup> B. G. N. Sariffo'deen, *The Story of My Life* (B. G. N. Sariffo'deen, n.d.). The author's ancestors went to Ceylon from Kuching, in Sarawak, presently in Malaysia.

<sup>26</sup> Noor R. Rahim, "Reminiscence of Our Proud Malay Heritage" (unpublished manuscript, June 2015); Noor R. Rahim, *Malay Culinary Delights* (Kotikawatta: Kumpulan Melayu Kotikawatta, 2015).

<sup>27</sup> Tuan M. Zameer Careem, *Persaudaraan: Malay Life in Sri Lanka* (Colombo: S. Godage and Brothers, 2016).

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, the following articles by M. D. Saldin, "Constable Tuan Saban's Shootout with Saradiel," *Sunday Island*, March 16, 2003; "The Keris – Malay Weapon, Social Symbol and Talisman," *The Sunday Times*, August 7, 2011.

<sup>29</sup> Ismail Hamid, "Islam dalam Sejarah dan Masyarakat Melayu Sri Lanka," *Sari* 9 (1991): 25–41; Harun Mat Piah, "Tradisi Kesusasteraan Melayu Sri Lanka dalam Konteks Kesusasteraan Melayu Tradisional Nusantara: Satu Tinjauan Ringkas," *Sari* 4.2 (1986): 63–82; B. A. Hussainmiya, "'Melayu Bahasa': Some Preliminary Observations on the Malay Creole of Sri Lanka," *Sari* 4.1 (1986): 19–30.

<sup>30</sup> For a detailed introduction to this archive, see K. D. Paranavitana, "Dutch Political Council Minutes: An Introduction," in R. G. Anthonisz, *Digest of Resolutions of the Dutch*

sent to Ceylon via lists of names, dates of banishment and arrival, reasons for exile, details of living arrangements, of the status and of the treatment of royals, soldiers and slaves, allowances given in cash and provisions, requests for their increase and petitions of those wishing to return.<sup>31</sup> For example, information can be found about royal exiles living in Jaffna, Colombo, Trincomalee and Galle in the early eighteenth century, such as a note from 1717 reporting that Prince Aroetekoe was granted leave to live in town instead of inside the Galle Fort where he had been previously kept.<sup>32</sup>

The records of the British period are also voluminous, and they too contain information on the Malays, with a focus on their military role. In addition to the official archive, many memoirs and works sketching life in Ceylon in its myriad aspects were written in the nineteenth century by scholars, administrators, military personnel and visitors, and these included occasional depictions of Malays and their perceived way of life, sometimes in minute detail. Percival described the dress of the Malay slaves, contrasting it with the attire of the Malays of noble descent: “While Malays of a higher rank wear a wide Moorish coat or gown which they call *Badjour* ... most of the slaves in the service of Europeans, instead of the piece of cloth, have breeches of some coarse stuff given to them by their masters.”<sup>33</sup> Such colonial-era sources, both Dutch and British, offer many interesting details. These are often precisely the kind of details missing from local Malay writings whose major concerns lay elsewhere. The European sources are important and revealing yet circumscribed, and with their external gaze tell only part of the story. One way to gain better insight into the exilic experience – for those exiled and those left behind – is to move beyond the colonial archive and explore indigenous chronicles.

The Malays’ history between the seventeenth and early twentieth centuries reflects connectivities, interactions and movement across the

*Political Council Colombo: 1644–1796* (Colombo: Department of National Archives, Sri Lanka, 2012), 9–20.

<sup>31</sup> A few examples will suffice here: Eight state exiles from Tidore were given an allowance increase (SLNA 1/183, Political Council Minutes, November 30, 1781); the allowances of state exiles from across the archipelago were increased or decreased based on careful surveillance of their family size, including among others the widow of the prince of Bantam, the king of Gowa, the family of Pangéran Buminata, the prince of Bacan, the former king of Kupang, and the emperor of Padang (SLNA 1/200, Political Council Minutes, March 8, 1788); eighteen slaves of the Company were taken into service as soldiers, among them Bugis, Balinese, Makassarese, Batak and Sumbawanese individuals (SLNA 1/176, Political Council Minutes, June 19, 1778).

<sup>32</sup> On Aroetekoe, see SLNA 1/51, January 1717 (no day noted).

<sup>33</sup> Percival, *An Account*, 148.

Indian Ocean in a range of ways: the Malays' religious, cultural and linguistic ties to the lands to the southeast and further west in Arabia; the entanglements of colonized and colonizers in South and Southeast Asia; and the ways cultural survival and diasporic imagination played out in the community's writing practices in its new home. A primary gateway to understanding these processes is offered by surviving Sri Lankan Malay texts, fragments of a tradition that allow us to recover the Malays' own voices.

Sri Lankan Malay manuscripts written and copied between the eighteenth and early twentieth centuries and early print books have survived almost exclusively in private family collections with several small, and challenging-to-access, collections kept at libraries in Kuala Lumpur, Colombo and Brunei. Such manuscripts and books testify to an impressive and ongoing engagement by previous generations of Malays with a range of texts, written primarily in Malay and Arabic with occasional sections in Tamil, pointing to the links between the Malays and their Tamil co-religionists. The linguistic multiplicity of many manuscripts is contrasted by orthographic unity, with all languages – Malay, Arabic, Tamil, Javanese – almost always written in forms of the Arabic script.<sup>34</sup>

The majority of extant Malay manuscripts and books possess an "Islamic character" in that they include theological treatises, manuals on prayer and ritual, well-known hadith, tales written in the Malay genres of *hikayat* (prose) and *syair* (poetry) on the battles of early Islam, heroic figures and adventures, musings on Arabic letters and mystical tracts. A striking feature of these writings, at least to one approaching from the perspective of Indonesian or Malay studies, is how similar many of them are to those found in manuscripts now housed in Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur or Leiden. In addition, however, there are works that represent very local agendas, depict events that unfolded in colonial Ceylon, or are otherwise not known from the broader eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Malay literature from elsewhere. The vast majority of these materials have not been read by scholars, let alone been scrutinized for their religious, cultural and social significance.

Two major repositories formed the data base for this study. The first was the Hussainmiya Collection at the Department of National Archives in Colombo, a set of a dozen or so microfilm reels containing manuscripts and various documents collected in the 1970s by Hussainmiya and microfilmed at the time. The condition of many of the microfilms

<sup>34</sup> In some cases (and increasingly so in the twentieth century) Romanized Malay was used, as were the Tamil and Sinhala scripts.

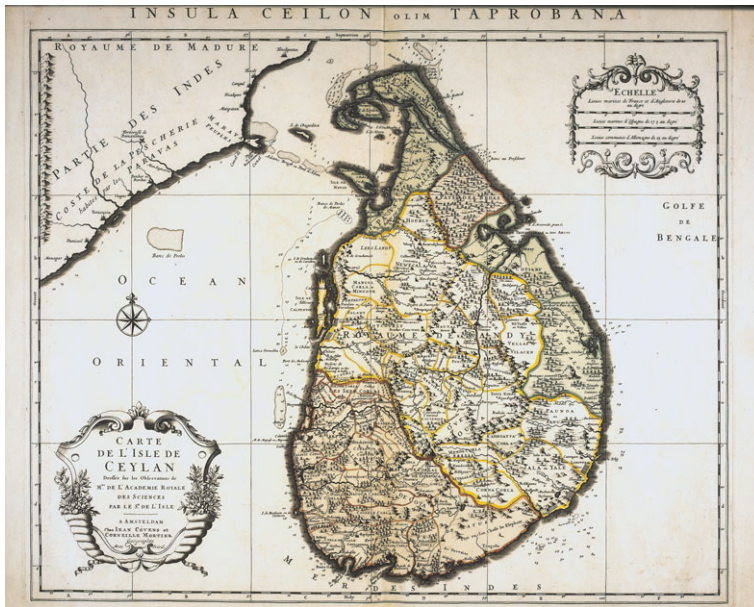


Figure 1.3 Map of the Island of Ceylon, Covens and Mortier, 1721. Bern University Library, ZB Ryh 7401 10

is poor, and several reels are no longer readable. Many of the texts were microfilmed backwards (from left to right, rather than right to left as appropriate for works in the Arabic script), some texts are missing pages or merge abruptly into another work, and there is no catalogue or even basic list that guides one through the materials. The location of the original and very precious manuscripts which were microfilmed remains unclear, but they are now classified as “missing” from the archives.

The second repository on which this study is based was created by the present author. There are no publicly accessible Malay collections in Sri Lanka in libraries or museums, and Malay materials can be located only via personal connections and the visiting of private homes. From 2011 to 2016, with funding from the British Library’s Endangered Archives Programme, I surveyed and documented surviving Malay writings across Sri Lanka, ultimately creating a digital archive through which the approximately 130 documented items can be viewed. These include manuscripts, family diaries, letters, booklets, mosque deeds, marriage records and more from the greater Colombo area, Kandy, Trincomalee, Kaniya, Hambantota, Matale, Badulla, Kurunegala, Kalpitiya, Puttalam



and elsewhere, some of which are discussed in the pages to follow.<sup>35</sup> Having spent several years in attempts to locate Malay materials and witnessing the serendipitous nature of this search, it is my conviction that the materials found very likely form but a component of a larger, fragmented and significant archive.

The available Malay sources date almost exclusively from the early nineteenth century onward and are often silent on many of the details provided by earlier Dutch documents pertaining to living arrangements, ships carrying exiles or precise dates on which events related to banishment took place. They reveal much about religious and literary traditions passed down through generations, links to ancestral places in the archipelago, genealogies, local affiliations and agendas. The prism now available is not only temporally circumscribed but is also almost entirely Muslim in character. In considering the silences of this archive, in addition to absences of religious and language variation which loom large, we might also wonder what types of literature may have been taken to Ceylon but left no knowable trace. For example, Old Javanese literature was very important at the central Javanese Kartasura court, home to many of the early eighteenth-century exiles, prior to the Chinese War. However, the court's plundering by the Chinese and Madurese in 1742 signaled a watershed: a disaster after which that literature never regained its role in the court's literary life.<sup>36</sup> Might have Old Javanese works been taken from Kartasura to Ceylon, perhaps to survive there after their decline in Java?

As this book explores banishment to Ceylon and Malay diasporic life, it would have been incomplete without including views from the "other shore," that of the Indonesian Archipelago and in particular Java. I begin by asking what people in the courts of central Java, whence came many of the royal exiles, knew about Lanka, Sarandib and Ceylon and whether the names of the island echoed familiarly, evoking figures and episodes well known to them. I wonder what it might have been like to read, or listen to, tales of earlier exiles to the same island once exiled courtiers had arrived at their destination. These are questions that are important to understanding the Malays' experiences but also resonate

<sup>35</sup> Although due to space constraints I could not include as many passages in the original and translation from these sources as I had wished, all documents are freely available online on the British Library website at <https://eap.bl.uk/project/EAP450> and <https://eap.bl.uk/project/EAP609>. Whenever available the site also contains information on each document including ownership history, current ownership, physical condition etc.

<sup>36</sup> Merle C. Ricklefs, *The Seen and Unseen Worlds in Java, 1726–1749: History, Literature and Islam in the Court of Pakubuwana II* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998), 336.

with the broader history of exile by the VOC within and beyond the Dutch East Indies.

Studying exilic experiences in the colonial period poses many methodological challenges. Secondary sources that touch on exile while basing themselves on indigenous sources are few and, even in existing ones, exile does not typically constitute the main focus of attention. Regarding Indonesia, notable exceptions include Merle C. Ricklefs' prolific scholarship on eighteenth-century Javanese history and especially his research on the "missing *pusakas*" of Kartasura; Nancy Florida's study of the *Babad Jaka Tingkir*, inscribed by the ruler of Surakarta Pakubuwana VI, exiled to Ambon after the Java War; Peter Carey's monumental work on Prince Dipanagara, who was exiled to Manado and then Makassar; and Muridan Widjojo's book on Prince Nuku of Tidore which discusses cases of exile from the islands of eastern Indonesia in the late eighteenth century.<sup>37</sup> While all these studies, and several others, have contributed significantly to an understanding of the history of exile from the islands of today's Indonesia, attempts to reconstruct the map and legend of exilic movement under the VOC, however partially, still pose considerable difficulties, among them access to primary sources, including the vast number of potentially relevant manuscripts in Javanese and additional languages, many but not all catalogued, housed in archival collections across the world. Even for those catalogued, to researchers' great advantage, information needed to assess content in depth is often lacking. Javanese historical chronicles – *babads* – can be hundreds of pages long and contain a wealth of details that cannot be easily summarized in a catalogue entry. For example, in the twenty-one volumes of the *Babad Giyanti*, a mere few pages are dedicated to a rare and highly significant passage about exilic life in Ceylon.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup> See Merle C. Ricklefs, *Jogjakarta under Sultan Mangkubumi 1749–1792: A History of the Division of Java* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974); Merle C. Ricklefs, *Modern Javanese Historical Tradition: A Study of an Original Kartasura Chronicle and Related Materials* (London: SOAS, 1978); Merle C. Ricklefs, "The Missing *Pusakas* of Kartasura, 1705–1737," in *Bahasa- Sastra-Budaya: Ratna Manikam Untaian Persembahan kepada Prof. Dr. P. J. Zoetmulder*, ed. Sutrisno Sulastin et al. (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 1985), 601–630; Ricklefs, *Seen and Unseen*; Nancy K. Florida, *Writing the Past, Inscribing the Future: History as Prophecy in Colonial Java* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995); Peter Carey, *The Power of Prophecy: Prince Dipanagara and the End of an Old Order in Java, 1785–1855* (Leiden: KITLV, 2008); Muridan Widjojo, *The Revolt of Prince Nuku: Cross-Cultural Alliance-making in Maluku, c. 1780–1810* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

<sup>38</sup> Yasadipura I, *Babad Giyanti*, 21 vols. (Betawi Sentrum: Bale Pustaka, 1937–1939), XXI: 83–87. On this episode, see Chapter 5. The published edition contains no information about its source manuscript. However, there are grounds to believe it was the Ned. Bijbel. Genootschap MS 29–33; see Theodore G. T. Pigeaud, *Literature of Java*, 3 vols. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967–1970), III: 719–720. On the *Babad Giyanti* as a historical

The Javanese sources for this book include the aforementioned *babad* genre, historical chronicles composed in the courts of central Java, primarily in Surakarta, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and recounting events such as wars, internal conflicts and intrigues at court, evolving relations with the Dutch, and details of the nobility's personal lives. Some *babads* contain many inconsistencies; some were inscribed several years or decades after the events they depict or were copied anew much later. Like all historical documents, they represent a particular perspective, a moment in time, a surviving voice from a largely unknown past. Some bewilderment can arise from several *babads* possessing the same title and following the lives of particular figures, due to the confusing Javanese tradition of name-changing at important points during a person's life, such as when one was saved from calamity, received a new role at court or returned from exile. Other Javanese works cited are more literary and poetic in nature. Especially important to this study are the works composed or attributed to the court poet Radèn Ngabèhi Yasadipura I. Written in the eighteenth century, the century *par excellence* of banishment from the Dutch Indies to Ceylon, his works engage with the island's various nomenclatures and offer a glimpse of what may have been known about the site of exile, and the lived conditions and experiences of those banished and those returned.

One gap in the Javanese sources is the seemingly relative paucity of references within them to exile. This may be a mistaken perception, the result of the meager prior scholarly inquiry into the topic. But in the available sources, if exile to Ceylon was acknowledged, this was often done briefly and laconically. Statements such as *amikut bupati telu, linajengken manca layar, binucal Sèlong nagari* ("the three *bupati* were captured, then sailed overseas, banished to Ceylon"), *kabucal dhateng Sèlong, jalaran ngaturi dedamel perang, dhateng Simuhun Sunan Kabanaran* ("he was banished to Ceylon because of waging war against Sunan Kabanaran," referring to the *bupati* of Semarang) or (writing of Mustapa, the sultan of Banten) *kakendhangaken dhateng Sèlong, nanging lajeng kawangsulaken malih kalengahanipun lami* ("he was banished to Ceylon, only to be brought back again to his place of old") offer a justification for exile – typically framed in terms of revolts, treachery, suspicions in the political realm – but no word or close to none on the experience.<sup>39</sup> The time that elapsed between the affairs depicted and their narration

source, see Merle C. Ricklefs, "*Babad Giyanti*: sumber sejarah dan karya agung sastra Jawa," *Jumantara: Jurnal Manuskrip Nusantara* 5.2 (2014): 11–25.

<sup>39</sup> The quotes are from Yasadipura I, *Babad Giyanti* (Surakarta: Budi Utama, 1917), 3.1: 110; Yasadipura I, *Babad Giyanti* (BP), 7: 9, 9: 42.

could have dulled the force of dramatic events and raw emotions but, if so, the same should have been true for many other events depicted in the babads, which are portrayed with greater detail and nuance. A lack of information available to authors and scribes about what became of those exiled on their journeys and of the circumstances under which they lived in Ceylon could have also been an obstacle to detailed descriptions. There may have been very little contact, or none at all, between those exiled and their families and officials who remained behind, although letters to the governor-general and Council in Batavia have survived, proving that at least some contacts were maintained.

The reasons for the brevity of depiction could have been less straightforward, relating to the exiles' position on the "losing side" of history yet capable of concerning the powerful, in episodes discussed throughout this book. This was evident in the case of Amangkurat III, the exiled king of Mataram whose uncle Pangéran Puger received Dutch support and ascended the throne, and yet clearly Amangkurat's descendants still had some claim to power and still posed a threat, evident in Pakubuwana II's rather anxious insistence, depicted in the *Babad Kartasura*, that he was legitimate heir to Amangkurat III, not the latter's two sons who had returned from exile; and even though Pangéran Arya Mangkunagara, another member of the Javanese royal family whose life will be discussed later, was not allowed to return from Ceylon alive, prophecies and historical developments alike bestowed royal authority on his nearest of kin.<sup>40</sup>

The stories of early exile and later diasporic life of the Malays in Ceylon have thus been on the periphery of various forms of historical writing and of scholarship. As mentioned, the carriers of Malay to this region converted it, by means of their religious practices and textual culture, into a frontier of Malay-world Islam. Ceylon was also, more specifically, a frontier of the Malay language as well as of additional vernacular languages of the Indonesian Archipelago, the latter apparently gradually disappearing but leaving tantalizing hints, in several manuscripts and letters, of their past usage in the early period of exile and enlistment. In fact, spoken varieties of these languages may have survived to a much later date than assumed so far. The employment of Javanese, the Indonesian language for which some evidence exists in Sri Lankan

<sup>40</sup> These events will be discussed in Chapter 4. The diverse repository of Javanese historical materials also contains examples contrasting with those examined here, as in the case of the *Babad Mangkudiningrat*, a memoir that depicts in great detail the exilic experiences of Sultan Hamengkubuwana II and his two sons in Penang, Batavia and Ambon in 1813–1826. See Sri Margana, "Caught between Empires: *Babad Mangkudiningratan* and the Exile of Sultan Hamengkubuwana II of Yogyakarta, 1813–1826," in Ricci (ed.), *Exile in Colonial Asia*, 117–138.

Malay texts, included the use of poetic meters (*tembang*) and the preservation of certain literary-historical traditions like the tales of the *walis* who are said to have taken Islam to Java (see Chapter 3). In the much more prevalent case of Malay, the use of the *syair* genre as well as the genres of *hikayat*, *pantun*, *kitab* and *maulud* in their Malay varieties in Ceylon testifies to the expansion of Islamic writing of the archipelago toward new frontiers. This expansion was neither initiated nor led by Muslim armies, itinerant teachers or religious travelers, but originated with forced migration through exile and recruitment to colonial armies. With time, and with subsequent locally born generations in Ceylon, an exilic experience transformed into a diasporic one, with the Ceylon diaspora living at a distant edge-point of its “home” culture, a condition that invited and reinforced the use of the imagination.

The study of diaspora has expanded greatly in recent years.<sup>41</sup> No longer referring exclusively to the post-exilic dispersion of the Jews, as it did for many years, the word “diaspora” has been employed so widely that some claim it has lost its analytic efficacy. In this book the Malays are understood as a diasporic community due to their ongoing connections, real and imaginary, to their lands of origin, their continuous use of the Malay language over many generations and the cultural and religious identity they have maintained in a Buddhist-majority society where Sinhala and Tamil have been dominant. Recent theorization by Ato Quayson on diaspora and literature – a theme central to this book – has called attention to the need to “generate a supple model for interpreting literary texts in full view of their grounding in the recursive mobilities of the past and present time, including the vast voluntary and coerced population movements of colonial times and their impact on the imagination.”<sup>42</sup> This certainly rings true for understanding Sri Lankan Malay writing, which has its earliest roots in the forced migration of princes and kings, as well as in the mobility of soldiers, slaves, texts, ideas and material objects that circulated along with people. Quayson views literature as a privileged site for the study of a diasporic imaginary because of the manner by which it binds affect to questions of ontology in both the content and the form of narration.<sup>43</sup> Three elements are central to the

<sup>41</sup> For a comprehensive and regionally relevant introduction, see Sunil S. Amrith, *Migration and Diaspora in Modern Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>42</sup> Ato Quayson, “Postcolonialism and the Diasporic Imaginary,” in Ato Quayson and Girish Daswani (eds.), *A Companion to Diaspora and Transnationalism* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 140.

<sup>43</sup> The term “diasporic imaginary” was employed earlier, in a slightly different manner, by Brian Keith Axel, “The Diasporic Imaginary,” *Public Culture* 14.2 (2002): 411–428.

diasporic imaginary in literature according to this formulation: place, nostalgia and genealogical accounting. The question of identity – who am I – within the diasporic imaginary is viewed as necessarily entangled with that of place. The reference is to a place of origin, but can also apply, I suggest, to the diasporic's new home. Returning to the question of nomenclature, in the Malays' case this formulation also raises the question of which is the relevant "place" to speak of, and how the identity question shifts, if it does shift, when the place is Ceylon, Sarandib or Lanka. Nostalgia, in this model, overlaps markedly with the concept of place as it is intimately tied to a sense of displacement, foundational to the constitution of diasporic identity (even when the place has never been encountered in person).<sup>44</sup> Genealogical accounting, central to defining the diasporic imaginary, involves questions of "ancestry, ethnicity, tradition and culture and provides a distinguishing past to the person or community," often including stories of the "how we got here" variety, producing a nexus of affiliations such that the fate of the individual is seen to be inextricably tied to the fate of all others in the group.<sup>45</sup> In terms of nostalgia and also genealogy, many of the details of the Malays' homelands – diverse to begin with – faded with time, but an ongoing connection to places across the archipelago, as known or imagined, and to central components of literary and religious culture, well-known heroes and textual traditions, lived on.<sup>46</sup>

It is to these diasporic connections, sensibilities and imaginings, and their textual representations as gleaned from multiple perspectives, that the following pages are dedicated. What emerges are fragments of a history, of a literary culture, of lives lived individually and as a community, the ways in which they were documented, retold, imagined, remembered and forgotten in different places and moments, embedded in stories from the cosmic to the mundane. In view of this group's diverse origins, the time that has elapsed since its forefathers arrived in Ceylon as exiles, soldiers or slaves, its minority status within the population, and the fact that it still speaks Malay in the twenty-first century, its story is no less than remarkable.

<sup>44</sup> The desire for a lost or unknown place generates both possibilities and constraints for the imaginary: Quayson, "Postcolonialism and the Diasporic Imaginary," 148–149.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>46</sup> Religion has been central to Malay diasporic identity, as well as to that of other diasporic groups, yet religion has received much less theoretical attention in diaspora studies than the notions of race, ethnicity and nation. See Sean McLoughlin, "Religion, Religions, and Diaspora," in Quayson and Daswani (eds.), *A Companion to Diaspora and Transnationalism*, 125–138.