

Discourse Through Letters: A Social-Functional Approach

Asmah Haji Omar

University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Abstract: Letters are a mode of interaction that can be used as data for a study of discourse, as they can generate a flow of communication between interactants. This paper examines a collection of letters which are “one-sided”, *i.e.* they originate from one sender, in the absence of letters from the interactants. The objective of this paper is to show that an understanding of the relationship between the sender and the recipient of the letters is possible through an analysis of the “one-sided letters” by using the social-functional approach which is based on [1]’s theory of text-in-situation. The corpus of the study is a collection of letters written by a Malay Sultan at the end of the 19th century to the King and Governors of Provinces of Siam (Thailand). Arriving at the social situation of the composition of the text is through the use of Inference from information derived from three functions of the text: ideational, interpersonal and textual.

Key words: Analysis of letters • Discourse • Surat-surat Sultan Abdul Hamid Shah

INTRODUCTION

This paper is about discourse on a one-to-one basis, but the medium is not by means of articulation of the human sounds transmitted through sound waves, but through the use of graphic symbols, namely writing. Letters written by one individual to the other may be said to be a transposition of the primary form of human communication, which is verbalised speech, to one that is written.

A message transmitted verbally is a composite of the facts of the matter framed within a context of situation whose components are social, cultural and psychological. In a verbalised speech these components are clearly visible through intonation and paralinguistic features such as those of body language and the effect this form of communication has on the listener is immediate in the sense that the response comes in real time, resulting in a chain of stimuli and responses which in totality is known as conversation. Another point to remember is that in real speech, there is the opportunity to do repair work, but this is possible only when the speaker at the instance of uttering his speech realises that he has made a *faux pas* and quickly excuses himself for having made a slip of the tongue. An apology made and accepted on the spur of the moment prevents a derailment of the discourse.

In the written form, the same message assumes a more static posture. Effects on the recipient of the message may not be as vivid as in verbalised speech. There are devices for elements of intonation used in writing, such as the comma, the colon, the exclamation mark and so on, but not all systems of writing make use of such devices. A clear example is the Jawi script (adapted from the Arabic script) as used in the writing of the letters which are the subject of this paper which uses only the dot as a form of punctuation to denote the end of a sentence. Apart from these devices which we call punctuation, there is nothing much that the writer can resort to in his meaning making, other than the correct choice of words, phraseologies and types of sentences. An opportunity for repair work occurs only at the moment of writing, but as response is not immediate, the writer never realises his mistake until much later when the response comes, also in written form. By then the damage is already done.

The Corpus: Data for this study is taken from a collection of letters written by Sultan Abdul Hamid Halim Shah who ruled Kedah in the years 1881-1943 C.E. This collection has been recognised as World Heritage by UNESCO. It is now kept in the National Archive, Kedah Branch, Malaysia. The Malay word *surat* used in the title of this collection, *Surat-Surat Sultan Abdul Hamid Halim Shah*

is a generic term referring to letters, documents of all types, circulars and public notices. And such is the composition of this collection. That is to say what is meant by *surat* is message or communication written with a particular recipient in mind on the one hand and those which are meant for the public on the other. For the purpose of this study, I would use the term “letters” to refer to *surat* with definite recipients. Those *surat* which are directed to the public with no definite recipient are “documents”.

The collection dated 1881-1895 consists of 500 or so letters of various lengths which were sent by the Sultan to four main groups of recipients: the Siamese, the British, rulers of other Malay states and the Sultan’s own subjects. They are all written in Malay in the Jawi script and have been transcribed into Rumi (the Romanised script). Of this sum total a great majority consists of those written to the royal court of Siam and governors of provinces within the kingdom of Siam and it is this group of letters that is the subject of this paper.

Letters to the Siamese: Until 1905, the Siamese (*i.e.* the Thais) had an indirect control over the governance of Kedah, a Malay state in the northern part of the Malay Peninsula (bordering Thailand), The Sultan’s letters were directed to the King of Siam in Bangkok through those in the inner circle of power who held different functions. There are also letters to governors of the provinces ruled by the Siamese King and among these provinces were those that were originally part of the Kedah kingdom annexed by the Siamese in the third decade of the 19th century.

The collection consists of letters or rather copies of letters only from the Sultan to the Siamese and there is not a single copy from the Siamese to the Sultan. Our understanding of the concept “letter” is that it implies a two-way communication, in that there is a letter sent, which we can call stimulus and another which is a response to the first letter. As there is no letter from the Siamese side in this collection, it may be taken to mean that there is no real discourse between the Sultan and the Siamese. It then appears as though there is only one person sending messages without any response from other or others. Hence, there is absence of an interaction between two interactants. But this not the case. Interpretation to this situation can be done by inference.

There are two levels of inference which I have applied. The first level is a general one and it is found in almost every single one of the Sultan’s letters where a reference is made to a previous letter sent from Krong

Tib (the old name for Bangkok) or other parts of Siam. This means that there had been an on-going exchange of letters between the Sultan and the Siamese.

The second level of inference is derived from the statement made in every single one of the Sultan’s letters that the letter was written in two *huruf*, one in Malay and one in Siamese. The word *huruf* (literally “script” or “writing system”) is used instead of *bahasa* (language), because of the obvious: Malay at that time was only written in the Jawi (Arabic) script, while the Siamese language has always been written in its own script. A more salient point to this level of interpretation is that the Sultan must have sent two versions of his letters using two different languages to the Siamese. What he received from the Siamese were only letters written in the Siamese language. This inference is made despite the fact that there does not seem to be any trace of the Siamese letters in the Kedah Archive. Perhaps they can be found in an archive in Thailand. The fact that the Sultan’s letters refer to those sent from the Siamese royal court as well as those from governors of Siamese provinces means that those letters did exist and that he received them. Their absence from the Kedah archive means that they got lost at some point of time during the course of history.

At this juncture it should be mentioned that Sultan Abdul Hamid of Kedah was a Malay-Siamese bilingual, having gone to school in Bangkok from his adolescent years to the time he was called back to Kedah to succeed his brother, Sultan ZainalAbidin, who died young without leaving an heir to the throne. At that time Sultan Abdul Hamid was barely 20 years old. In one of his letters he mentioned that he had two clerks, one who took his dictation in Malay and the other in Siamese. The question that arises is whether with the existence of two-language versions of the same letter, one is a translation of the other. Without the Siamese texts as comparison, it is difficult to ascertain this as a fact. A greater probability is that for every letter composed, the Sultan conducted one single dictation through Malay-Siamese code-switching. I have come to this conclusion through another set of inferences.

The first in this set of inferences is that the Sultan was a Malay-Siamese ambilingual which means that he was able to function equally well in both languages. This means that moving from one language to the other without losing grips with the social rules of both cultures, *i.e.* Malay and Siamese, was not difficult for him. Reading through all those letters over and over again, I have come to the second of these inferences, that is, he was not only killing two birds with one stone, but he

also wanted to ensure that the contents of the two language-versions of the letter were exactly the same, with no variation whatsoever.

The second of this set of inferences is supported by a statement at the conclusion of a letter to the Governor of Senggora that the letter had only a Malay version because the Siamese-language clerk had gone off to Pulau Langkawi to meet the engineer there. If the Sultan had dictated the two versions consecutively, he would have waited for the clerk to return from Langkawi to give a dictation for the Siamese version of the letter. After all, it would not have taken half a day by fishing boat even in those days to go to Langkawi from Kuala Kedah and another half a day back. All in all, the clerk would have been away for three days which relatively was not a long time of waiting in the late 19th century. In this case the Sultan had taken liberty to send the letter only in Malay, although the rule was that all letters to any part of Siam should be written in Siamese. In sending the letter only in Malay to Senggora, one can infer that the governor could read Malay and he could also be a Malay.

These inferences are in line with the Sultan's style and attitude in carrying out his duties, as reflected in his letters. He was not the type of ruler who passed down mandates to his subordinates. He would attend to every task and supervise every detail himself. So it was not in his character to leave the dictation or the drafting of his letters to anyone else, even to his *Menteri Besar* (Chief Minister). Giving a particular message through two languages in sequence of one another with a time lapse in between would have given rise to variations, not in the core of the message but in its sociolinguistic tone.

The core of the message is in the ideational aspect of the text and for as long as the originator is in control of the facts of the matter, the message remains intact even if it is written in two different languages. However, uniformity of the interpersonal aspect of the same message given in two languages cannot always be guaranteed. This is because this aspect of the text is reflected in the choice of words and sentence-types, which is determined by the different social rules that guide the users of each language. In consecutive dictation using two different languages, it is not easy to attain even near-uniformity in the choice of linguistic elements appropriate to the social function of the language. In all probability, an ambilingual like the Sultan would prefer a simultaneous two-language dictation of his letters, through code-switching, so that he could do repair work for both versions in real time.

For the purpose of the analysis that follows, consideration has to be given to the fact that there were letters from interactants on the Siamese side. This is made possible from constant references to them made by the Sultan in all his letters.

As the ruler of a state which was a tributary of the Siamese kingdom, the Sultan had to report to the king from time to time on the affairs of the state *i.e.* the state's revenue from agricultural products, trade and taxes and requesting for approval in the development of the state's infrastructure such as the building of roads, telegraphs, etc. Conflicts among members of the royal family and ways of resolving those conflicts were also reported to the King of Siam, not to mention the gang wars among Chinese secret societies in Kulim and the smuggling of opium into Kedah from Province Wellesley.

Letters to the governors of provinces, among them the Governors of Senggora, Satun and Ligor, concern the affairs of these provinces in their relationship with Kedah, particularly in the control of the border areas where there was constant smuggling of buffaloes and cattle, as well as on fugitives running across the border into Kedah. The letters also show the co-operation between them in the building of roads and telegraphs.

Objective of this Study: The objective of this study is to determine:

- The extent of information of the social context which formed the background in the writing of those letters; and
- The type of interpersonal relationship between the interactants.

Analysis of the Letters: The theory used in this analysis is based on the approach in discourse analysis proposed by [1] of British Linguistics in his theory of text-in-situation, which hinges on the reality that text arises from situation, be it in spoken or written discourse. In either situation there are two interactants: the speaker or the writer on one side and the hearer or the respondent on the other. The premise is Who writes What to Whom. It is on this premise that social relationship is seen in the language used.

As for function, according to [1]'s theory, a discourse has three functions: ideational, interpersonal and textual. All these functions are reflected in the text of the discourse and the use of linguistic elements in meaning making. The ideational function of a text reflects the thinking process that goes in the making

of the text, while the interpersonal function shows the social relationship between the interactants. The textual function relates to the feature of the discourse itself in terms of its coherence and cohesion [1].

As stated earlier the letters appear to be a one-way communication as they all originated from the Sultan. But the texts of these letters show that each letter that the Sultan wrote did indeed have a response from the person who received the letter. There were two groups of interactants and these were:

Group (a)

Sultan → King of Siam → Sultan → King of Siam ...

1 → 2 > 1 → 2 > 1 → 2 > 1

Group (b)

Sultan → Gov. of Prov. → Sultan → Gov. of Prov. ...

1 → 2 > 1 → 2 > 1 → 2 > 1 ...

Fig 1: Changing of Roles of Interactants

The schema above shows that for each group of (a) and (b), there are two interactants, (1) and (2), but the role of each one changes as the discourse progresses. If we take Group (a), for instance and assumes that the Sultan is the interactant who begins the discourse, then he is Interactant (1) and the King of Siam Interactant (2). But when the King Siam responses to the Sultan he changes his role to (1), hence 2 > 1 and such is the course of the exchange of letters.

There is an absence of hard data in the form of letters from the Siamese side. However, in the analysis of the interpersonal relationship between the interactants, the only possibility is to derive this relationship as reflected in the texts of the Sultan's letters *i.e.* through the three functions of the text: ideational, interpersonal and textual.

As shown earlier, inference is made use of to explain the following:

- The context in which the Sultan's letters were written.
- Why the two letters had to be written in two languages.
- How the letters were dictated and the Sultan's ambilinguality.

- The existence of letters from the Siamese side.

Social Ranks of the Letters: The letters involved can be placed in a scale of hierarchy according to their social status or rank which equates that of the social status the writer. The one occupying the highest rank in the order is the *Surat Tra Phrak Kichi*, or *Surat Tra* for short. This category of letters was issued by the royal court of Siam, that is the king himself, or anyone acting in his name, giving a command or advice on the governance of Kedah, demanding for information on the state's revenue from agricultural products, trade and taxes and giving approval in the development of the state's infrastructure, etc. No definite action could be taken by the Sultan before he received approval from Bangkok through the *Surat Tra*.

The word *tra* refers to "power" which the King of Siam would confer on his subjects as well as on foreigners which entitled them to carry out certain duties or undertake an enterprise. *Kichi* means "to roll up" which reminds us of the tradition of rolling up parchments in the days before envelopes were invented. This is equivalent to the *surat ciri* in Malay royal courts of by-gone days. The word *Phrakor Phra* can be translated as "royal". Hence. The name *Surat Tra Phrak Kichi* in itself is a symbol of power decreed by the King of Siam.

The second in rank are the letters written by the Sultan to the Siamese royal court. The placing of the Sultan's letters to the King of Siam in the second rank in the social hierarchy of letters is based on three factors:

- The second interactant was of a very high rank, much higher than the Sultan and one who had power over the Sultan.
- Arising from above, the honorifics as well the language of finesse used in the texts are specific to a discourse with an interactant of this stature.
- The ideational aspect of the text is couched in the type of language which is elaborate, more elaborate compared to that used in letters to the governors.

The third in the rank are letters from the Sultan to the governors of provinces in the Siamese kingdom and vice versa. Technically speaking, Kedah was a province of Siam although it had more freedom in self-rule compared to the other provinces. The texts of the letters to these governors show that the Sultan and the governors treated each other on an equal basis. While showing respect for one another, they seemed to be free to criticise and chide one another over regulations and traditions

which affected their peace and tranquility as neighbours. Politesse in such letters is not as elaborate as those in the second rank. The same applies to the ideational aspect of text of the discourse. It is more brief and straight to the point.

The two groups of letters discussed are written using the same format. They consist of three sections, such as the following: (i) Beginning, (ii) Message, (iii) Ending. But the groups differ in the treatment of each section.

The Beginning section may be interpreted as a phatic communion where appropriate terms of personal reference are used and good wishes are expressed. The choice of these terms in referring to one's interactant as well as to oneself is most important. There seem to be rules applied by the Sultan within the frame of his Malay Muslim culture, which had to interface with the Thai Buddhist culture, without causing offence to either side.

The contents of the message section are factual and the Sultan seems to frame his thought with great clarity even in reporting to the King of Siam affairs which are of an emotional nature, as in the conflict between him and his two uncles who were taking advantage of their position in demanding advantages from him. The comments he directed to brother governors can at times be sarcastic but couched in appropriate language. This part of the letter indicates the application of a more elaborate language in the letters in the second rank, compared to the one in the third rank. The ending can be equated to taking leave, which is never abrupt. It is always accompanied by good wishes. See discussion below.

Language and Format of the Sultan's Letters to the Royal Court of Siam: The opening of the Sultan's letters to the royal court of Siam can be divided into two units: Unit (1) and Unit (2). The first unit has references to the Sultan himself as writer of the letter, while the second is a statement that he is paying respect to the person the letter is directed to. They are written in sequence of one another.

Example:

Unit (1): Beginning the letter

Perhamba Phya Reti Songkran Ramphakdi Sultan Muhammad Ratana Rajmutin Tra Surin Teroyongse Phya Cheraiburi.

(= Your servant King Reti Songkran Ramphakdi Sultan Muhammad Ratana Rajmutin Tra Surin Teroyongse, King of Cheraiburi)⁽¹⁾

Unit (2): Beginning the letter

Maklum sembah junjung pada Ke Bawah Duli Nai Phrabat Phrak Chao Adinda Baginda Krom Luang Teo Wong Waru Phrak Karn Sitabodi bicara pekerjaan asing negeri.

(= Be informed that he wishes to pay homage to His Royal Highness Prince Chao, Younger Brother of His Majesty Krom Luang Teo Wong Waru Phrak Karn Sitabodi, who is in charge of the Foreign Affairs of the Provinces.)⁽²⁾

The only Malay word in Unit (1) is *Perhamba* (=your humble servant), a first person pronoun used by Malay Sultans in the old days to refer to themselves even when they were speaking to the common people.

The other non-Siamese element in Unit (1) is the Sultan's name, *Sultan Muhammad*, followed by a chain of titles in the Siamese language *Sultan Muhammad* appears to be the name assumed when the Sultan communicated with the Siamese. The name that appears in letters written by him to others, e. g. the British, other Malay rulers and his own subjects and by them to him, is his real name, Sultan Abdul Hamid Halim Shah. The change of name is a reflection of the exercise of power on the part of the Siamese Royal Court to create, through using an alternate name, a difference of the Sultan's status as a power in his own state and as a ruler subordinate to the King of Siam. However, his Muslim faith had to be indicated in the Siamese designation of his status; hence Sultan Muhammad.

Giving another name to members of the Kedah ruling house appears to be the tradition of the day, such that when in communication with the Siamese royal court these personalities could not use their own name, but had to use the name given to them by the King of Siam. This name is known as *nama letak*, which can be translated as "a name based on an appointment to a particular position or rank". So the Sultan's name given by the Siamese is the one in Unit (1) above.⁽³⁾

In Unit (2), the parts printed in bold consist of the titles (in Siamese) and the name of the prince who was the recipient of the letter. The Malay parts are the following:

- *Maklum sembah junjung pada* (Be informed that he wishes to pay homage to) -informing: ideational.

- *Ke Bawah Duli* (His Royal Highness) - royal title: *interpersonal*.
- *Adinda Baginda* (royal bother of His Majesty) - honorific: *interpersonal*.
- *Bicara pekerjaan asing negeri* (who is in charge of the Foreign Affairs of the Provinces) - *job description: ideational*.

The message section of the letter is a request from the Sultan to the King of Siam, through his younger brother, to return the state of Perlis (situated to the north of Kedah) and the Province of Satun (now part of Southern Thailand) to Kedah, where they rightly belonged. When the Siamese made a surprise attack on Kedah in 1821, both Perlis and Satun were districts of Kedah. But the Siamese Governor stationed in Kota Setar, the capital of Kedah, gave Perlis away to an Arab (who was married to a Kedah princess) and made him ruler and Satun to a member of the Kedah royal family not in direct line to the throne. In the letter, the Sultan made a case in clear terms on why these districts should be returned to Kedah. But as we know from history, the Sultan never succeeded in this quest.

The message part of the letter can be divided into a number of units according to degree of complexity of the message. All the units are held together by discourse words which are a feature of classical Malay. These discourse words denote the beginning of a topic, the passing of one topic or event to the other and the closure of the message.

The ending of the letter may also be divided into two units. The first consists of a statement or statements of gratitude and appreciation for past and real-time favours given by the recipient of the letter to the writer and expression of hope that the request would be granted. This unit is full of praises for the recipient of the letter and the king. The second unit is the final closure of the whole discourse, stating that the letter is written in two versions, Malay and Siamese, on such and such a date. The date is given according to the Muslim calendar. The units are given below in their English translation.

Unit (1): Ending the letter

As for your humble servant, since the old days until now, there is no one that he can rely and depend on

except His Majesty. To him (*all the titles of His Majesty are mentioned here*) comes your servant to pay homage to make known every inconvenience that befalls him. Even now your humble servant places high hopes that His Majesty (*more honorific and praises*), will lend his ears, as it is only him who has been the protector of my family from before.

Unit (2): Final closure of the letter

This letter is written, one in the Siamese script and the other in the Malay script. The contents are the same. Wednesday, 25 Jamadilakhir 1308 Hijrah.

The date given in this letter is equivalent to 1890 C. E. The Christian calendar had not been in use in the Malay states in the period under consideration. Letters written by the Siamese counterparts record the date of writing according to the Buddhist calendar and this information is found in every letter that the Sultan wrote in response to the ones he received from Siam. Having been educated in Bangkok, there is no doubt that he was familiar with the Buddhist calendar, but that he chose to use the Muslim calendar shows that he was sticking to the Muslim Malay tradition.

Language and Format of the Sultan's Letters to the Governors of the Provinces: The format of the text is the same as that of the letters to the royal court of Siam. The difference lies in the language used and the brevity of praises and honorifics. The example given below is taken from a letter sent to the Governor of the Province of Senggora.

Unit (1): Beginning the letter

Surat dari Perhamba Phya Reti Songkran Ramphakdi Sultan Muhammad Ratana Rajmutin Tra Surin Teroyongse Phya Cheraiburi.

(= A letter from your humble servant *Phya Reti Songkran Ramphakdi Sultan Muhammad Ratana Rajmutin Tra Surin Teroyongse Phya Cheraiburi*)

Unit (2): Beginning the letter

Sampai pada Tan Phya Sontra Norak yang kata pekerjaan negeri Senggora.

(= Reaching the Honorable Sontra Norak who is in charge of Senggora)

Both Units (1) and (2) as the opening parts of the text are less formal and less elaborate in politesse compared to those used in letters to the royal court of Siam. Unit (1) is a straight forward piece of information on the origin of the letter. However, the Sultan uses all his royal titles to the full, because this is his *nama letak*, in the way that is found in his letters to the royal court of Siam. This may be construed as a signal to the Governor of Senggora (as well as to other governors) that he was Sultan in his own right in a kingdom which he inherited from his forefathers, not just a ruler appointed by the King of Siam. The honorific that he used to address and refer to the Governor of Senggora is *Tan Phya* which in this context can be translated as “Honorable Ruler”.

In the message section of the letter the Sultan refers to a letter from the Governor of Senggora of the danger that ordinary folks faced when crossing their common borders because of the presence of armed robbers and other criminals. The Sultan was in agreement with the Governor that they should co-operate in making the area safer. The text of the content section uses polite language but not in such an elaborate way as seen in the letter sent to the royal court of Siam.

The part which ends the letter may also be divided into two units. The first unit is a statement informing the recipient that the letter was going to be delivered to him by a person known as Bang Mat. The second unit, as in all the Sultan’s letters, represents the final closure, with the statement that the letter was written in two scripts, Siamese and Malaya, with same message and this is followed by the date of the letter.

The letter to the Governor appears to be less formal and less superfluous in terms of politesse compared to the one sent to the King of Siam’s younger brother. This is an indication of the variation in social distance between the Sultan and the two parties concerned.

Nama Letak: Nama letak is a Malay phrase referring to the name of an individual given by the royal court of Siam when he assumes a certain position. It appears from the letters that the Malays who were in the ruling council of Kedah were not allowed to use their own name when dealing the Siamese government and Siamese officials. Their *nama letak* are Thai names.

For example:

Original Name	Nama Letak
Tunku Dhiauddin	Phya Yutakan Kusun
Tunku Yaacob	Phya Surapon Pipit
Tunku Abdul Aziz	Phrak Seni Narong
	Rit Raja Muda
Wan Muhammad Saman	Phrak Tanin Ternipat

Sultan Abdul Hamid Halim Shah’s *nama letak* was *Phya Reti Songkran Songkran Ramphakdi Sultan Muhammad Ratana Rajmutin Tra Surin Teroyongse Phya Cheraiburi*. The only Muslim Malay element in this *nama letak* is *Sultan Muhammad* which has replaced his original name Sultan Abdul Hamid Halim Shah and which serves to preserve his identity as a Muslim. Those below him were to able to do so.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The context of situation which formed the background of the writing of those letters is clearly seen in terms of interpersonal relationship between the Sultan and the recipient of his letters. The letters to the royal court of Siam show a relationship in which the Sultan was a subordinate to a greater power and that is the King of Siam and those in the inner circle of the royal court. This is evident from the mention of the *Surat Tra Phrak Kichi*, the superfluity of politesse, lengthy royal titles on the Siamese side, the use of only *nama letak* on the Kedah side, elaborate use of language in the message part and the requirement that letters sent to any part of Siam must have a Siamese-language version.

On the other hand, the Sultan and the governors of the provinces appear to be of equal rank. The letters were sent straight to the interactants without a go-between. There is the presence of polite language but it is not as elaborate as in letters sent to the royal courts of Siam. Message was worded in a straight forward manner and the subject matter was on issues common to both sides and it is not the type where approval is sought by one party from the other.

Although the Sultan had to be subservient to a power whose religious faith was Buddhism, he was able to retain his Muslim identity even in the *nama letak*, where Sultan Muhammad is used. This is also evident in his use of the date of the Muslim calendar in all his letters, even though the letters from the Siamese side use the date from the Buddhist calendar.

CONCLUSION

It has been shown that letters are a mode of interaction that can be used as data for a study of discourse, even when copies form one side of the interaction are available. The social situation in which the letter is composed is made clear when the interpersonal function of the text of the discourse is examined. Arriving at the social situation of the composition of the text is the use of Inference from information derived from the text. As has been shown in this paper, inference may be able to derive information that is not overtly present in the text.

Notes:

- It is not possible to give an exact translation of the long titles of honour attached to the Sultan's name. *Phya* is the Siamese for ruler, which was used by the Siamese to refer to the Sultan and Cheraiburi was the name that the Siamese used to replace the name "Kedah", when the Malay state came under their rule.
- As in note above, a similar difficulty arises in translating Siamese honorifics.
- Below are examples of names of some of those in the Council of Rulers of Kedah, which are all in the Siamese language:

<i>Own Name</i>	<i>Nama Letak</i>
Tunku Dhiauddin	Phya Yutakan Kusun (Sultan's <i>uncle</i>)
TunkuYaakob	Phya Surapon Pipit (Sultan's <i>uncle</i>)
Tunku Abdul Aziz	Phrak Seni Narong Rit Raja Muda (<i>Crown Prince</i>)
Wan Muhammad Saman	Phrak Tannin Ternipat (<i>Chief Minister</i>)

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