

Hikayat Abu Nawas.

BY R. O. WINSTEDT.

Apparently there are no MSS. of this story in England or Holland. There is a MS. in Raffles' Library, Singapore, in the colophon of which it is stated that the MS. was transcribed at Sungai Kalang, but no date is given: obviously it is not old. Another version has been lithographed in Singapore quite lately, A.H. 1336. The two Singapore texts are identical in subject-matter, and differ little even verbally.

Three MSS. of the *Hikayat* are in the library of the *Batavia-sch Genootschap* (*Vide* van Ronkel's *Catalogus* in *Deel* LVII of the *Verhandelingen* of that Society: pp. 125-127). The first two of these MSS., Nos. CXXVII and CXXVIII in the *Catalogus*, give a version different from the Singapore recension. They make Abu Nawas the son not of a Kathi but of a Penghulu. The *mantëri* is given a name, that of the famous Luqman (*vide* Hughes' "Dictionary of Islam"). On p. 22 of the first MS. there is the story of how Harun a'r-Rashid bade Abu Nawas sew up a broken stone mortar. That MS. is dated 1865 and contains 21 tales. It would appear to be identical with *Tjerita Aboe Nawas* printed by Albrecht and Rusche in Batavia (3rd edition 1894), of which I give an outline below. MS. No. CXXVIII is described as "inferior, indecent and incomplete," in all of which respects perhaps it resembles the Singapore texts. The third MS., No. CXXIX, was collected by von der Wall: like the Singapore versions, it makes Abu Nawas the son of a Kathi and omits mention of Luqman.

Van Ophuijsen has printed four tales, (which I have numbered (9), (3), (6) and (7) in my summary below of the Singapore version), on pages 25-6, 115-121 and 152-164 of his Romanized *Maleisch Leesboek* (Leiden 1912). Ophuijsen does not give the source of his text: slightly better in style and here and there fuller in phrase, it resembles otherwise the Singapore versions very closely both in wording and in matter.

(Here I should like to call the attention of English students to the value of the Readers and *Bloemlezing* edited by so many Dutch scholars as store-houses of fragments selected from unpublished Malay MSS.).

I have printed two tales, numbered (5) and (13) in my summary of the Singapore version, in *Pëlampas Akal*, (pp. 36-37, and 63-67) a Romanized Malay Reader for Standard III of the Government Malay Schools: Kelly and Walsh, Singapore, 1919. As it is a school-book, I have emended a few difficulties in the text.

So, from the Singapore recension of the *Hikayat Abu Nawas* there will remain only a few unimportant tales (Nos. 1, 2, 4 and 8) fit for publication, that will not be accessible in Romanized Malay.

Snouck Hurgronje's description of the Achinese recension of the *Hikayat* leaves no doubt that it is more or less identical with the Malay version. "This Malay work consists not so much of anecdotes from the life of the Arab poet Abu Nawas as a collection of popular tales respecting an imaginary court-fool who has much in common with the German Eulenspiegel and to whom the name of this poet has been given. Compare also the *Contes Kabyles* of A. Moulieras, Introduction: *les Fourberies de Si Jeh'a*, p. 12 (*Bou Na'as*) and M. Hartmann's *Schwanke und Schnurren*, S. 55 and 61 (*Zeitschrift für Volkskunde*, 1895")—"The Achinese," vol. II p. 157.

Abu Nawas, (*obit* A.D. 806-813) one of the greatest Arabian poets was half Persian by birth. His discreditable adventures, quick wit and resource are recorded also in the "Arabian Nights." (*Vide* Abu Nawas, p. 102 "Encyclopaedia of Islam").

My summary gives the pages of the Singapore MS. in Raffles' Library:—

- (1) Page 1. A Kathi the father of Abu Nawas, lay dying. He bade his son kiss him. Abu Nawas noticed that one of his father's ears smelt foul, the other sweet. His father related how once he had inclined his ear to one party in a suit but not to the other.
- (2) p. 2. Abu Nawas pretends to be mad to avoid succeeding his father as Kathi under Sultan Harun a'r-Rashid.
- (3) p. 4. An Egyptian merchant, a sojourner in Baghdad, dreams he has married the new Kathi's daughter, paying a huge dowry. Hearing of the dream the Kathi demands the dowry and seizes the merchant's goods in payment for a marriage existing only in a dream. An old woman advises that Abu Nawas be consulted. Abu Nawas orders his pupils to break into the Kathi's house at night. The Kathi complains to Sultan Harun a'r-Rashid. Abu Nawas declares he dreamt it was done and so he had it done; following the example of the Kathi who had exacted the dowry only dreamt of by the merchant! The Kathi is punished and his goods restored to the Egyptian.

A Malay Mouse-deer story with a similar plot is printed in *Journal* No. 46, 1906, pp. 85-88.

- (4) p. 10. Sultan Harun a'r-Rashid gives Abu Nawas two goats. They are each to be fed with the same quantity of the same food for 40 days. At the end of that time one is to be fat and the other lean. Abu Nawas puts a cat in the pen of one of the goats and the cat's restless movements keep the goat lean.
- (5) p. 12. Harun a'r-Rashid orders Abu Nawas to find six head of cattle, bearded and gifted with speech. Abu Nawas brings bearded louts who cannot say what is the day of the week!
- (6) p. 14. Abu Nawas wants money. He invites Harun a'r-Rashid to accompany him to a Bedouin house to hear wonderful music. He induces the Sultan to sit under a tree, while he goes up to a Bedouin agriculturist and sells him Harun a'r-Rashid as a slave.
- (7) p. 21. Harun a'r-Rashid wants to kill Abu Nawas for his treachery. Abu Nawas pretends to be dead, having first instructed his wife to ask the Sultan in the presence of all the mourners to forgive all the deceased's sins towards him in this world and the next. The Sultan does so, whereupon Abu Nawas comes to life.
- (8) p. 26. Abu Nawas declines to present himself to court on the plea that he is pregnant; as it appears later, in a metaphorical sense.
- (9) p. 30. Harun a'r-Rashid knowing that the mother of Abu Nawas is dead orders him to bring her to court. Promising to divide the reward, 100 dinars, with her, Abu Nawas persuades an old cake-seller to adopt him and brings her. When the Sultan decrees him 100 stripes, Abu Nawas represents that he should get only 50 and the old woman 50, as they had agreed to share alike. The Sultan pardons both.
- (10) p. 35. Harun a'r-Rashid, having secretly given a number of divers an egg apiece, calls Abu Nawas and orders them all to dive into a pond: whoever fails to bring up an egg is to be punished. Abu Nawas fails but escapes punishment by protesting that all the others are hens but he a cock!
- (11) p. 37. At a *maulud* gathering, the court attendants sprinkle the company with rose-water but Abu Nawas with *ayer sēni*! Abu Nawas pretends to be ill and when the Sultan

visits him recovers and ascribes his recovery to certain pills. The Sultan insists on trying the pills and Abu Nawas administers three in which he had mixed *tahi*! When the Sultan discovers the trick, Abu Nawas demands hush-money.

- (12) p. 41. Abu Nawas, accused of impropriety with a girl in the palace, is put in a tigress' cage but escapes being devoured by an indecent trick.
- (13) p. 53. By relating how he had worsted the tigress, Abu Nawas makes the Sultan laugh. The laughter causes an intestinal ulcer, from which the Sultan suffered, to burst.
- (14) p. 55. Abu Nawas is captured by Bedouins who would slay and eat him. He offers to find a stout friend to take his place and fetches Harun a'r-Rashid. The Sultan persuades the Bedouins it will be more profitable to let him live and make caps. After six months' captivity he embroiders on a cap a message to his Vizier and is rescued. Abu Nawas saves himself, by pleading that he only wished the Sultan to see the state of his country.
- (15 & 16) p. 62. The concluding two connected stories are too indecent even to summarize. Siti Zubaidah, consort of Harun a'r-Rashid, asks to rule for a day in order to punish Abu Nawas, but his Rabelaisian behaviour scares her into her chamber.

The *Tjërta Aboe Nawas* (Albrecht and Rusche, Batavia) is in poor Batavian Malay. Of three of the tales (Nos. II, IV and XI) I have given versions in Peninsular Malay in *Tangga Pěngětahuan*, a Jawi Reader for Standard III of the Government Malay Schools (Kelly and Walsh). The following is a summary of the contents of the *Tjërta*:—

I. The first section contains substantially tales 1, 2 and 4 of the Singapore recension. Abu Nawas is the son of a *pěnghulu* and Luqman is mentioned.

II. The tale of sewing the broken mortar. Cf. the tale of the king of Egypt requiring a broken millstone to be sewn up—"The story of Ahikar in Syriac, Arabic, etc.," Conybeare, Harris and Lewis Smith; Cambridge.

III. Tale 9 of the Singapore recension.

IV. Harun a'r-Rashid orders Abu Nawas to tell him the number of the stars of heaven and to determine the centre of the world.

V. Harun a'r-Rashid sends Abu Nawas to visit His Highness' sick mother and says, "I'll slay you whether you report her dead or

alive. She dies. Abu Nawas returns and sits in silence before the Sultan. Harun asks, "Is she dead or alive?" Says Abu Nawas, "Your Highness has uttered the words, not I."

The original of this story would seem to be that of the Persian king Khusraw Parwiz and the poet Bahlabad (or Barbad) retold a century later by the Arab poet Khalid bin Fayyad (Browne's "A Literary History of Persia," vol. I, p. 17).

VI. Tales 15 and 16 of the Singapore recension.

VII. A coarse indecent tale of how Siti Zubaidah orders the defiling of the house of Abu Nawas who stipulates that the defilement shall be only the one kind ordered.

This tale occurs in the Arabic *Nafhatu'l-Yaman* ("J. and P., A. S. Bengal," vol. III, No. 7, July 1907 where the editors suggest it is an oriental version of the story of the pound of flesh.)

VIII. A merchant vows to sacrifice a goat with horns 1 *jěngkal* wide, if his wife bears him an heir. She bears a child, but the merchant cannot find a goat with horns of the requisite width. The priests tell him that no other kind of goat will serve. He presents himself before Harun a'r-Rashid who consults Abu Nawas. Abu Nawas bids the merchant bring the biggest goat he has got together with the new-born infant. The goat horns are found to measure 1 span (*jěngkal*) of the infant's hand!

IX. A wealthy man offers 10 *děrham* to any one who can endure to remain in the chill water of his pond one whole night. A poor old man with the help of Allah endures but the wealthy man refuses to pay, because the poor man's son had lit a fire on the edge of the tank and so, he declares, kept his father warm. Abu Nawas invites the Sultan, the unjust judge who had refused the poor man redress, and the wealthy man to his house where he lights a fire under a tree above which he had hung a pot. Harun points out that he'll never cook his rice because the fire is so far away from the pot. Abu Nawas pleads that the same remark applies to the fire lit on the bank of the pond when the poor man stood in the water. Harun sentences the rich man to pay the poor fellow 100 *děrham* and imprisons him and the unjust judge.

X. Abu Nawas is bidden to teach a cow (*sampi*) to recite the Koran. He tries to beat her to death to escape an impossible task.

XI. Abu Nawas undertakes to remove a mosque on his back.

XII. Nakhiebah is an unjust and libertine *mantěri*. Abu Nawas embroils a young man with him over the sale of a cow; persuades the youth to get admission into the *mantěri's* house disguised as a girl, and there beat him to death. Nakhiebah is not quite killed. So Abu Nawas disguises the youth as a doctor (*dukun*) and tells him really to kill the *mantěri* this time on pretence of treating him. The youth again fails. The *mantěri* tells his wife to pretend he is dead and bury a banana stem in his stead. He will be hidden

on the bier. Abu Nawas hires a horseman to scatter the mourners, while the young man really kills the *mantëri*, who is actually buried.

XIII. Abu Nawas has a poor relation who wants to trade. To get him capital, Abu Nawas sends his wife Maria to the Sultana, Siti Zubaidah, to say that she wants alms to bury her husband, Abu Nawas, who has just died. Meanwhile he himself goes to Sultan Harun and asks for alms to bury his wife! They both get money and start their kinsman in trade. Maria however keeps back 250 of the 350 *dërham* given to her.

XIV. The poor relation loses all his money in trade and enters the service of a Jew, with the stipulation that whoever of them gives the other notice shall forfeit a pound of flesh. The poor trader cannot endure the hard work, and forfeits his pound of flesh. Abu Nawas enters the Jew's service to avenge his relative. He works well but continually eats his master's food. The Jew anxious to get rid of him but fearful of forfeiting a pound of flesh determines to kill him. Abu Nawas puts the Jew's wife in his bed. The Jew kills her and has to flee the country, leaving half his property behind. Abu Nawas asks for one nail out of the property and before the Raja and merchants come to the auction of the Jew's property hangs stinking meat on it. They pay him 8000 *perak* in all to remove the meat. He gives the poor relation 1000 *perak* and the man trades and grows rich.

XV. Harun orders Abu Nawas to get a bearded tiger (*machan*). Abu Nawas puts up a trap in his house, and after arranging with his wife, goes to an elder of the mosque and tells him that his wife has quarrelled with him. The elder goes off to talk to the lady and finding her fair draws very near to her. Abu Nawas returns and knocks at the door. His wife puts the elder in the cage to hide. Abu Nawas takes the trap with its human victim before the Sultan and the elder is disgraced for ever.

This forms one incident in the tale of *Musang Bërjanggut* (*J. R. A. S., S. B. No. 52*) which is mostly derived from the Suka-saptati (or Sanskrit original of "The Enchanted Parrot" Wor-tham's translation, Tale XXXIII).

XVI. The story how Muhammad Khali by a filthy trick cured his wife of her guilty passion for a *bilal*.

XVII. Harun a'r-Rashid calls all his advisers except Abu Nawas to choose a name for his son. They select Abdul-Rahman. Abu Nawas annoyed presents himself before the Sultan and declares it is a name fit only for fools. To prove it he goes to the house of a Penghulu Abdul-Rahman, hides money under his mat, pretends to listen to the chirping of birds outside the house and declares the birds are saying there is money under the mat. Abdul-Rahman finds it is so. Abu Nawas repeats the trick for several days. On the seventh day Abu Nawas weeps and says the birds declare that Abdul-Rahman is about to die. To avoid this tragedy, Abdul-

Rahman is persuaded by Abu Nawas to follow his advice, be shrouded and put on a bier; whereupon Abu Nawas takes him before the Sultan as proof that all people of that name are fools.

XVIII. An unsavoury tale of how Abu Nawas gets into disgrace for fouling a stream.

XIX. Harun asks his vizier Ja'far Barmaki (the Barmecide) what the water bubbling in a hookah is saying. He cannot tell. Abu Nawas avers it is asking the news from the burning tobacco.

XX. Harun stipulates that Abu Nawas shall travel neither on the ground, nor in a carriage neither in the sun nor in the shade. Abu Nawas fixes a broken umbrella on a pony's back, puts one foot in a stirrup and ties one to the umbrella and so rides.

XXI. Abu Nawas repays a nasty trick to Harun in kind: tale (11) of the Singapore recension.

XXII. A hump-back has a beautiful wife. A lover impersonates the husband and the wife cannot distinguish between them. Abu Nawas makes a big *gēndi* with two spouts and bids both the fellows scramble through the spouts. The man who sticks is declared to be the real hump-back and the other is punished.

Two short tales of Abu Nawas, that do not appear in either of the above recensions, are printed in *Pēnimbau Akal* my Jawi Reader for Standard II of the Government Malay Schools.

In the large (unpublished) version of the *Hikayat Bakhtiar* (Raffles' MS. 63, Library of Royal Asiatic Society, London; *vide* van der Tuuk's "Account" in "Essays relating to Indo-China," Second Series, vol. II) among many other tales occur two of Abu Nawas, which Dr. Brandes in his paper on the *Hikayat Bakhtiar* ("Tijdschrift voor Ind. T. L. & Vk. v. N. I. Deel XXXVIII") summarizes as follows:—

"*Tale 53.* Sleepless, Sultan Harun a'r-Rashid visits a mistress Kamar a'z-zaman. He bids Abu Nawas compose a poem on the incident. It is so lifelike that the Sultan thinks Abu Nawas must have spied on him. But Abu Nawas denies this and gets a reward.

Tale 54. Harun a'r-Rashid visits بدرالقام a mistress he has neglected. He keeps her standing but she excuses herself from his presence. In vain he awaits her return. He seeks her next day and tells her promises are made to be kept. She replies that one does not do by day what one promises at night. Abu Nawas وعدي رقصي and وعدي are bidden to write poems on the incident. Again Abu Nawas is accused of having played eaves-dropper, so life-like is his poem."



Winstedt, Richard. 1920. "Hikayat Abu Nawas." *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 81, 15–21.

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