SAMPLE

The Guardian's Shadow: Badi

The Mischief in All Things — Potency, Possession, and the Malay Art of Sending Harm Home

Aiden Nightfall

Free sample: Introduction & Chapter 1

putrabooks.github.io

Buy the full book:

Gumroad

Payhip

Contents

Introduction

Chapter 1: What Is Badi?

Chapter 2: The Origins of the Mischief — Five Stories and a Birth

Chapter 3: The Mischief's Address Book — Where the Badi Resides

Chapter 4: The Powers of the Mischief

Chapter 6: Protection against the Mischief — The Art of Sending Harm Home

Chapter 7: The Mischief in Modern Culture

Chapter 8: The Moral Lessons of the Mischief

Chapter 9: Separating Fact from Fiction — The Hygiene of the Mischief

Chapter 10: The End of the Shadow — A Series Closes

Glossary

References

The Guardian's Shadow

This free sample contains the Introduction and Chapter 1. The complete book contains the full contents above.

Introduction

Every tradition in this series has been about a being. This final volume is about what runs through the beings — the potency that makes them dangerous, the live wire under the whole Malay supernatural world. Its name is badi.

Badi is the "mischief" — Walter Skeat's chosen translation, and he defended it as the best equivalent he could find: the word the old Malays used for the evil principle that resides, in the medicine-men's doctrine, in all living things, and not only in living things but in earth and ant-heap and wood and water and stone. "It's got the mischief in it," Skeat noted, is what an English speaker says of a bad-tempered machine — and the old Malay would have understood at once. The crocodile has its badi; that is what makes a crocodile a crocodile. The deer's carcass has its badi, and must be cleansed before the meat is eaten. The snake's badi is its fascination — the power that freezes the man it looks at. The cat's badi raised a corpse. There are, the medicine-men said, a hundred and ninety of these mischiefs — or, other authorities held, a hundred and ninety-three.

Where did the first badi come from? The medicine-men disagreed, magnificently, and Skeat recorded all their answers: three drops of Adam's blood spilt on the ground; the monitor lizard; the Heart of Timber; the yellow glow of the sunset — Mambang Kuning himself, Volume 11's Yellow Divinity; or the offspring of the Jin Ibn Ujan, who dwells in the clouds and the hollows of the hills. Thus do Malay medicine-men disagree, Skeat wrote — and the disagreement is itself the doctrine: the badi is old enough, and everywhere enough, that no single story could hold it.

This is the twelfth and final volume of The Guardian's Shadow, and badi is the only possible finale, because badi is the series' hidden subject all along. The pontianak's hunger, the jembalang's retribution, the polong's rage, the sunset's danger — each of the eleven earlier volumes described what a being does; this volume describes what the being has, the potency whose presence made the Malay world careful, ritualised, and armed with charms. The badi is why one does not touch the dead animal, why the hunter beats the carcass with a black cloth before the feast, why the snake's stare must be answered with a counter-charm, why the corpse gets iron on its breast and the cat gets put out of the house. Remove the badi from the Malay worldview and every ritual in this series loses its reason; the whole apparatus of the pawang — the charms, the expulsions, the neutralisers — is machinery for dealing with the mischief in things.

The primary source, again, is Skeat's Malay Magic — for this volume beyond

any other, because no other colonial ethnographer documented the badi at all, and Skeat documented it everywhere: in the medicine- man's chapter and the hunting charms and the funeral customs and the tooth-filer's trade, in the full texts of the expulsion ceremonies with their astonishing roll-calls of the mischiefs' names — Mak Badi, Mother of Mischief; Mak Buta, the Blind Mother; Badi Serang, Badi Panji, Si Panchur Mak Tuli — and their equally astonishing method: send it home. "Badi of earth, return to earth. Mischief of ant-heap, return to ant-heap. Mischief of elephant, return to elephant." Not destruction. Return.

That method is the tradition's deepest teaching, and the right one to end a series on. The Malay art of the badi was never the art of fighting the world's mischief — it was the art of knowing where the mischief belongs, and putting it back there. Walk the last mile of the series, and learn the oldest trick in the pawang's repertoire: you do not defeat what lives in things. You address it, name its origin, and show it the way home.

Chapter 1: What Is Badi?

Skeat's definition, assembled from the medicine-men's chapter of Malay Magic, has three parts, and each part matters:

First: Badi is the name given to the evil principle which, according to the view of Malay medicine-men, [attaches to] all living things. Not some things — all living things. The doctrine is universalist: life itself carries a shadow, and the shadow has a name.

Second: the mischief is not confined to the living. The appendix charms describe badi residing "in earth, ant-hills, wood, water, stone, and elephants (or rhinoceroses) respectively." The mineral world is as implicated as the animal. A place can have the mischief in it; so can a timber.

Third: there are a hundred and ninety of them — or a hundred and ninety-three, "according to some, according to others." The number is not casual. It coincides — Skeat noticed with visible delight — with the number of the Black Genii of the Malay cosmology (one hundred and ninety, "or perhaps one hundred and ninety-three"), the cloud-and-hollow-dwelling jinn of Chapter IV. The two classes differ in one exact way: "though the Genii may do good, and the 'Badi' do not, both are considered able to do infinite harm to mortals, and both make choice of the same kind of dwelling-places — hollows in the hills, solitary patches of primeval forest, dead parasites on trees." The badi are the jinn's evil twin: same census, same addresses, no redeeming side.

Skeat translated badi as "mischief," and defended the choice at length: "it appears a very fairly exact equivalent when we remember its use in English in such phrases as 'It's got the mischief in it,' which is sometimes used even of inanimate objects." The English idiom is perfect because both words name a condition rather than a creature — a potency resident in something, expressing itself through it. The Malay word's etymology runs, most authorities agree, through Arabic badi' / badi'at and into a Malay sense of the perverse and the afflictive; but the tradition's use outruns its etymology. In the charms, badi is addressed as a person — "Ho Badi, Mother of Badi" — and treated as a substance that can travel, enter, seize, and be sent home. The badi is whatever makes the dangerous things dangerous: the cunning in the crocodile, the fascination in the snake, the wrath in the tiger, the malice in the cat, the peril in the corpse.

The tradition's vocabulary of harm needs one sorting at the start, because the sources themselves sorted it carefully.

Badi is the mischief: the resident evil principle, transferable by contact,

expellable by ceremony.

Bisa is the venom: the poison in the strict sense, what the sucking- charms drew from wounds (Volume 11's poison-charm sent the bisa out on the wind). The two overlap at the snake: the snake's bite is bisa, and the snake's stare is badi.

Grun is the fascination — the freezing power of the predator's gaze — and here the sources give a distinction of surgical precision: in Selangor, Skeat records, the fascination is called grun in the case of a tiger, and badi only in the case of a snake — "the person affected by it being said to be kena grun or kena badi, as the case may be." The victim of the stare is struck by the mischief: the same verb, kena, that the whole tradition uses for being hit by any supernatural harm.

- Nature — Badi: Evil principle resident in living things and places; Hantu (ghosts): Restless dead / wild spirits; Jin (genii): The cloud-dwelling genii (190/193); Bisa (venom): Chemical/envenomate potency - Can do good? — Badi: Never; Hantu (ghosts): Rarely; Jin (genii): Yes; Bisa (venom): No (inert) - Transfer — Badi: By contact — carcass, animal, stare; Hantu (ghosts): By encounter, haunting; Jin (genii): By contract, encounter; Bisa (venom): By bite, wound - Residence — Badi: Everything alive; earth, wood, water, stone; Hantu (ghosts): Graves, wilds, thresholds; Jin (genii): Hollows, deep forest, clouds; Bisa (venom): Fangs, spines, the wound - Remedy — Badi: Buang badi — expulsion by return; Hantu (ghosts): Exorcism, appeasement; Jin (genii): Charm, constraint, treaty; Bisa (venom): Sucking charms, antidote - Method — Badi: "Return to your origin"; Hantu (ghosts): Drive out or settle; Jin (genii):

Bind or befriend; Bisa (venom): Draw out

The charms preserve the badi's personal names, and they are among the most evocative in the whole Malay corpus: Badiyu and Mak Badi — the Mother of Mischief; Badi Panji; Mak Buta, the Blind Mother; Si Panchur Mak Tuli — with the Deaf Mother; Badi Serang. The register of the names is significant: the mischief is a family — mothers, blind and deaf elders, titled children — an underclass cosmology, the badi imagined as the inverse of a kampung: the mother of all harm and her sightless, hearing- less household. When the hunter addressed the mischief in the deer, he addressed this family; when the medicine-man expelled it from the sick, he sent the whole household home.

The badi is the only being in this series whose folklore gives it a genealogy and a household — which is, perhaps, the deepest sign of how familiar it was: the mischief in things was not a stranger to the Malays. It was a neighbour they had known so long they knew its mother's name.

Badi is the mischief in things: the evil principle residing, by the medicine-men's doctrine, in all living things and in earth, ant-hill, wood, water, and stone — a hundred and ninety of them (or a hundred and ninety-three), the evil twin of the Black Genii, able to do infinite harm and never good. It is distinct from bisa (venom) and grun (the tiger's fascination), though the snake's fascination is badi and its bite is bisa. The charms know the mischief's family by name — Mak Badi the Mother of Mischief, Mak Buta the Blind Mother, Badi Panji, Badi Serang, Si Panchur Mak Tuli — the one being in the Malay corpus with a household and a genealogy, as familiar as a neighbour, and as unwelcome in the house.

End of free sample. The full book is available at putrabooks.github.io