




# Incitement Against Authority Between Enmity and Conflict as Representation of Classical Malay Literature

Syaifuddin\*<sup>1</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> Universitas Sumatera Utara, Medan, 20155, Indonesia

\*Corresponding Author: [syaifuddin@usu.ac.id](mailto:syaifuddin@usu.ac.id)

---

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 5 April 2026

Revised 3 May 2026

Accepted 22 May 2026

Available online

<https://talenta.usu.ac.id/lingpoet/>

E-ISSN: 2745-8296

---

### How to cite:

Syaifuddin., (2026). Incitement Against Authority Between Enmity and Conflict as Representation of Classical Malay Literature. *LingPoet: Journal of Linguistics and Literary Research*, 7(2), 197–202.

---

## ABSTRACT

The book *Critical Approaches to Literature* by David Daiches, which has been widely used as a reference by scholars of both Eastern and Western literature, emphasizes the complexity of fully appreciating a literary work. The characteristics of *Sejarah Melayu* and *Hikayat Deli* as classical Malay literary works justify their classification as narrative hikayat texts. The aims of this analysis is showing the comprehending as a way to deliver information about an event on a cultural context which is regarding as a specific work perceived as distinct from other literary forms. The research problem concerns the meanings and interpretations of the narrative elements of incitement, authority, enmity, and conflict in *Sejarah Melayu* and *Hikayat Deli* as literary works, which are often appreciated merely for their aesthetic language. The approach employed adopts the author's narrative perspective within the framework of postmodernist thought. The findings indicate that the construction of incitement follows particular patterns directed toward authority, representing a reality of enmity and conflict shaped through narrative imagination.

**Keywords:** Incitement, Hikayat Sejarah Melayu dan Hikayat Deli, Authority, Enmity, and Conflict



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International.

<http://doi.org/10.26594/register.v6i1.idarticle>

---

## 1. Introduction

The term provocation is not found in Malay manuscripts nor explicitly expressed in the narration of events within classical Malay literary works, such as hikayat and syair. Instead, the term commonly used is *hasutan* (incitement), while the actor is referred to as a *penghasut* (inciter/instigator). Nevertheless, both terms share similar meanings, motives, missions, and affective values. In form, incitement constitutes an activity involving society, language, and the violation of customary norms and legal principles associated with Malay authority. Furthermore, incitement may be defined as the communication of an issue or event that is deliberately framed to create misunderstanding and to provoke intense emotional responses-particularly anger-among individuals, communities, or specific groups when responding to an issue that is circulated and publicized.

According to Syaifuddin (2024), within Malay society, acts of incitement or provocation represent the manifestation of a particular syndrome associated with cultural expressions of dissatisfaction and anger toward authority, individuals, or groups through activities carried out by instigators. Such activities often arise from feelings of powerlessness, oppression, and perceived injustice in relation to issues involving *marwah* (honor), dignity, and ethnic fanaticism. In line with that, in this condition, incitement becomes a strategic means to impose certain interests, missions, or objectives by individuals or groups within Malay society. The implications of such activities include the emergence of violence and slander, resulting in physical harm, moral injury, and damage directed at individuals as well as authority figures. Moreover, at the level of state philosophy, these effects contribute to a diminished sense of security among both rulers and citizens in carrying out social, civic, and religious activities.

The research problem focuses on the atmosphere of incitement within the narrative structures of Sejarah Melayu and Hikayat Deli, particularly in relation to enmity, conflict, and socio-psychological dimensions. This includes examining how the positions of the instigator and the incited namely authority figures and the narrative voice of the author-are constructed in interpreting moral dilemmas. Thus, the narratives of Sejarah Melayu and Hikayat Deli should not be regarded as mere ornamental tales or insignificant storytelling. Rather, as with other classical Malay literary works, they express the bitterness of enmity and conflict through forms of subtle cunning, revealing the characteristics of Malay rulers who metaphorically “run” and “hide” within the wilderness of words.

## 2. Method

Mohammad A. Quayum and Rosli (in Suhaimi, 2017) argue that incitement directed toward authority introduces a narratological perspective at its most fundamental level. This perspective on approach and events can be traced back to the era of Aristotle, later renewed by Ferdinand de Saussure and Vladimir Propp within the structuralist tradition. Subsequently, it has been revitalized through a renewed emphasis on the foundational principles of traditional storytelling. In line with this development, the notion of “grand narrative” emerges, grounded in the traditional structures of society and an understanding of the origins from which narratives of incitement are constructed. Within this framework, smaller narratives embedded in a larger narrative play significant roles in generating atmosphere and producing local color, thereby reinforcing a sense of cultural ownership within the community.

Consistent with the study by Arsa (2017), a more vivid depiction of moral dilemmas in acts of incitement is articulated through narrative representation. Such literary narratives are no less significant than historical writings, whether at the micro or macro level. Arsa further asserts that if historical studies overlook classical Malay literary works—such as Sejarah Melayu and Hikayat Deli—this study seeks to foreground their distinctive characteristics, particularly in their articulation of history through language imbued with Malay sensibilities and narrative expressions. The nuances of these works reflect Malay cultural identity, characterized by clarity of expression and linguistic forms adapted into varied syntactic structures.

According to Hall (in Loebis, 2023:28), although Arsa (2017) demonstrates that meaning is contested through different signs which composed in different language and with distinct signifying practices. Aline with that, in this study the representation of incitement, inciter and the individual who was incited, that is Malay authority reflect a tangible reality.

Therefore, this study aims to generate a meaning and its dissemination to produce signifying practices. Therefore, this sense, the representation of incitement, inciter and the incited in Sejarah Melayu and Hikayat Deli functions as a medium for producing and exchanging meaning within society.

## 3. Result and Discussion

### 3.1 Excerpt of the Narrative

*Penghulu Segala Saudagar di Melaka bernama Nina Sura Dewana, berseteru/bertikai dengan seorang Syahbandar, bernama Raja Mendaliar. Berteguh atas titah Sultan; “segala badai sengketa kerabat harus diselesaikan” lalu didamaikanlah pertikaian tersebut oleh Bendahara Seri Maharaja. Pada waktu pembicaraan perdamaian, tidak cukup waktunya, dan tidak selesai. Pembicaraan damai ditangguhkan waktunya pada keesokan hari. Menanti waktu yang ditetapkan, pada malamnya, Nina Sura Dewana khawatir Bendahara Sri Maharaja (pendamai) akan disogok terlebih dahulu oleh Raja Mendaliar, ia ke rumah Bendahara dan menghadiahkan emas. Kitul, seorang anggota keluarga Nina Sura Dewana, mengambil kesempatan atas peristiwa ini untuk menciptakan aktivitas hasutan kepada Raja Mendaliar agar hutangnya dapat dianggap lunas, dengan cara pada waktu tengah malam ia ke rumah Raja Mendaliar dan menceritakan peristiwa bersifat hasutan sehingga Raja Mendaliar mensyaki bahwa Bendahara menyebelahi Nina Sura Dewana dan telah membuat keputusan akan membunuh Raja Mendaliar. “Bentuk aktivitas hasutan itu dengan mengerahkan para peminum arak untuk berarak-arak/unjuk rasa sembari mengungkapkan ketidakadilan Bendahara Sri Maharaja dan seakan-akan ia seorang yang tidak berpendirian (berkepala angin)”. Aktivitas hasutan itu menggetarkan emosi agar melakukan tindakan di luar dari norma-norma adat/perundangan ketika itu. Raja Mendaliar memberi sesuatu kepada Laksamana Khoja Hassan, dengan cara “menyorongkan emas dan menghasut bahwa Bendahara berbuat sesuatu untuk merebut tahta kerajaan, hendak naik raja dalam negeri Melaka ini dengan bertameng dari peristiwa arak-arakan” Perkara ini segera dilaporkan Laksamana kepada Sultan dan Sultan pun menjatuhkan hukum bunuh kepada empat beranak yaitu keluarga Bendahara Sri Maharaja. Demikian juga pada kisah Hikayat Deli di Sumatera Timur, hasutan terjadi dengan versi dan gaya yang*

seakan berbeda, yaitu terjadi kepada Gotjah Pahlawan bergelar Panglima Kuda Bintang seorang wira yang sangat berjasa terhadap ekspansi Kerajaan Aceh ke negeri-negeri taklukannya. Dikisahkan bahwa isteri Gotjah Pahlawan, yaitu Puteri dari Sultan Pahang bernama Chairul Bariyah telah diambil Sultan Iskandar Muda Raja Aceh secara sembunyi-sembunyi, tepatnya pada saat Panglima Kuda Bintang atau Gotjah Pahlawan membela pasukan Raja Aceh menaklukkan negeri yang ingin ditaklukkan Kerajaan Aceh. Implikasi dari hasutan peristiwa ini Gotjah Pahlawan meninggalkan Kerajaan Aceh atau bertirah ke Tanah Deli. Kemudiannya mendirikan negeri Deli. Peristiwa hasutan yang terjadi kepada Gotjah Pahlawan dalam kisah Hikayat Deli berakibat pada terjadinya berpisahnya antar Paduka Panglima Kuda Bintang yang berjasa kepada Kerajaan Aceh dengan Rajanya, inilah kisahnya; “..... Ada pun yang ditangiskannya itu terkenal akan perbuatan Sultan Iskandar Muda melayani bermukah dengan isterinya tiadalah rupanya Sultan Iskandar Muda itu setia dengan dirinya dan begitulah beberapa banyak baktinya berupa menaklukkan beberapa negeri. Isterinya diambil juga. Sungguhlah seperti kata orang tua-tua: jika Raja Melayu tiadalah harus berbuat baik kepadanya, jikalau masa dahulu kala jika kita membuat baik itu berpada-pada dan membuat durhaka jangan sekali.” Hendaknya, Pada masa sekarang ini membuat baik itu berpada-pada dan membuat durhaka jangan sekali, itulah petuahnya orang tua-tua. Ia pun berhentilah menangis. Ia pun keluar dari dalam mesjid lalu berjalan mengadap Sultan Iskandar Muda ke Balai Pengadapan. Maka “...pada waktu itu Sultan Iskandar Muda tengah banyak dihadap oleh Raja- raja dan menteri Hulubalang “... Sri Paduka Gotjah Pahlawan pun naiklah ke Balai Pengadapan; setelah dilihat oleh Sultan Iskandar Muda dan segala Raja-raja Sri Paduka datang itu hingga terkejut sekaliannya tiada berkata seorang pun. Sultan Iskandar Muda pun tersangkalah bermukah dengan isterinya yang bernama Puteri Chairul Bariyah. Segala Raja-raja itu pun hingga heran hatinya melihat kedatangan Sri Paduka Gotjah Pahlawan demikian itu.

“Adapun yang selamanya ini jikalau dia datang dari peperangan, Sultan sendiri menyambut serta dengan besar-besar, sekarang dengan tiada memberi tahu seorang dirinya saja datang”... Berfikirlah segala Orang- Orang Besar, ada yang setengah berfikir mengatakan Sultan Iskandar Muda itu bermukah dengan Isterinya. Sri Paduka menyembah Menjunjung Duli. Sultan Iskandar Muda pun barulah ianya berani bertitah: hai Adinda Sri Paduka; bilakah adinda datang?. Sri Paduka pun menyembah mengangkat tangan : “ yang adinda datang malam tadi, adapun yang adinda datang mengadap ini memepersembahkan dari halnya adinda datang yang sudah menjunjung titah yang pertama membunuh orang tapa di dalam negeri Aceh ini, kedua melawan gajah kenaikan bernama Gendasuli, dan ketiga menaklukkan negeri Kedah dan keempat negeri Perak, dan kelima negeri Selangor dan keenam negeri Johor dan ke tujuh negeri Pahang dan ke delapan negeri Petani dan kesembilan negeri Kelantan, ke sepuluh negeri Kemuja, ke sebelas negeri Malaka dari pada orang Portugis, ke dua belas negeri Bangkahulu kemudiannya menyerang negeri Sambas yang sudah dapat setengah Negeri. Dari sekalian halnya yang adinda nyatakan itu supaya kakanda boleh ingat hingga sampai diketahui oleh anak cucu cicit kemudian hari. Sekarang adinda bermohonlah pada ini hari, adinda tiadalah lagi akan menjunjung titah kakanda dan seperti Puteri Chairul Bariyah telah adinda ceraikan dan boleh kakanda ambil akan menjadi pemijit kaki kakanda..”

### 3.2 Enmity and Conflict

In classical Malay literary works, namely Sejarah Melayu and Hikayat Deli, the incitement of rulers emerges as a narrative device employed to resolve personal grievances through the manipulation and violation of customary norms, ostensibly for the “preservation” of power. Such actions ultimately lead to unjust executions sanctioned by the Sultan. The victims of these executions are members of the family of Bendahara Sri Maharaja. The instigator in Sejarah Melayu is Kitul, who incites the ruler, the Sultan of Malacca. The medium of this incitement is the exploitation of ongoing disputes among the “Chief of All Merchants” in Malacca, namely Nina Sura Dewana, and a Syahbandar, Raja Mendaliar, stemming from alleged misconduct or corruption by Bendahara Seri Maharaja in the performance of his duties (Shellabear, 1978).

Similarly, in Hikayat Deli, the figure of Gotjah Pahlawan, also known as Panglima Kuda Bintang or Lebai Hitam, becomes entangled in conflict through acts of betrayal. The medium of incitement here lies in the treachery of the King of Aceh, who secretly seizes Gotjah Pahlawan’s wife, Chairul Bariyah, a woman from Pahang (Syarifuddin & Syarfina, 2003).

In line with these narratives, the Sultan of Malacca’s decision regarding Nina Sura Dewana, who was in conflict with Raja Mendaliar, and the subsequent decisions involving Raja Mendaliar and Gotjah Pahlawan’s stance toward the King of Aceh, are not merely driven by fear of wrongdoing. Rather, they are strongly influenced by the powerful resonance of incitement. Incitement gains its force through its ability

to read and exploit existing emotional conditions: the Sultan harbors resentment toward Seri Maharaja, while the King of Aceh has long concealed jealousy toward Gotjah Pahlawan. The King of Aceh's intention to publicly humiliate Gotjah Pahlawan further reinforces his pursuit of personal honor and royal authority.

Within the narrative of *Sejarah Melayu*, the Sultan of Malacca is also aware of the instigation, particularly the allegation that Bendahara Seri Maharaja, acting as a judge, accepted bribes from his adversary, Nina Sura Dewana. This information further strengthens the Sultan's conviction that Seri Maharaja deserves punishment. The question then arises: why does the Sultan appear to hastily decide on the execution of the Bendahara's family? A significant episode sheds light on this matter. During the arrangement of the engagement between Tun Fatimah and Tun Ali, Raja di Baruh, an elder brother of Sultan Alauddin and a relative of Seri Maharaja, suggests that Tun Fatimah be presented to the Sultan first, noting that "the state of Malacca currently has no queen, as the consort has passed away."

Aline with this condition, Raja di Baruh further emphasizes that "according to Malay royal custom, in the absence of a queen, the daughter of the Bendahara shall become the queen." This episode reveals that the Sultan exploits the situation as an opportunity to exact revenge against the family of Bendahara Sri Maharaja. Consequently, it drives the Sultan to issue an unjust execution order, aptly described by the Malay proverb, "like offering a pillow to a sleepy person". From this perspective, language as a medium of communication and a bridge for conveying events plays a crucial role. Classical Malay literary works such as *Sejarah Melayu* and *Hikayat Deli* represent a distinct linguistic form, differing from ordinary language use (Syaifuddin, 2018). In this context, the absence of alignment in meaning and interpretation can lead to discord and incompatibility, although the opposite may also occur. Reality, in its essence, may emerge from a calm and static space, whereas the language of these classical texts is shaped by chaos, intrigue, and turbulence. This dynamic construction transforms reality within the narrative into a Malay narrative subject driven by desire, often extending beyond the boundaries of plausibility. It is within this tension that enmity and conflict arise.

In general, enmity and conflict in *Sejarah Melayu* and *Hikayat Deli* refer to conditions of opposition or rivalry resulting from incompatible objectives among two or more parties within a given event. From a social psychological perspective, Kriesberg and Miall (Che Mat, 2019) from psychology perspective define conflict as a condition of "incompatible objectives among two or more parties," further elaborated as "social conflict exists when two or more parties believe they have incompatible objectives." Ali (2014) similarly argues that enmity and conflict in these narratives arise from incompatible interests or desires among ruling authorities. Thus, conflict in these texts can be understood as a process involving sentiments of desire, expectations, and needs.

Furthermore, according to De Bono, "Enmity and conflict in these narratives represent a condition of opposition in interests, values, actions, directions, and objectives". Even when conflict has not yet fully materialized, the presence of structural injustice or latent tension indicates the potential trajectory toward conflict. Such conditions may exist without manifesting in physical confrontation, yet they still constitute forms of structural violence.

In the narrative genre of *hikayat*, as exemplified by *Sejarah Melayu* and *Hikayat Deli*, enmity and conflict are frequently associated with violence and tyranny, often mediated through incitement. Consequently, they are generally perceived as negative elements to be avoided. However, some perspectives acknowledge the positive dimensions of conflict. Conflict may contribute to social dynamism or individual development, serving as a stimulus for creative responses and policy innovation among rulers. In this regard, Coser (Che Mat, 2019) asserts that conflict, at certain levels, contributes to the formation of new social structures.

A comprehensive analysis of enmity and conflict in these narratives encompasses three interrelated components, particularly in the context of social or inter-state conflict. First, situational conflict refers to conditions in which two or more social entities perceive their objectives as incompatible. What, then, constitutes the primary cause of such incompatibility? From Mitchell's perspective (Che Mat, 2019), the root cause lies in the misalignment between social values and social structures particularly between rulers and their elites, such as the Sultan and the Bendahara in *Sejarah Melayu*, and between the King of Aceh and his commander, Gotjah Pahlawan, in *Hikayat Deli* (Syaifuddin, 2025).

Furthermore, the demands imposed by the social structure upon individuals are virtually unlimited. Consequently, incitement creates the conditions for the emergence of prolonged enmity and conflict. Second, attitudinal enmity and conflict in the narratives of *Sejarah Melayu* and *Hikayat Deli* take the form of expectations, emotional orientations, and perceptions held by individuals or parties involved in situations of enmity and conflict. In other words, attitudinal conflict encompasses, first, emotional

orientations such as anger, distrust, hatred, and prejudice toward ruling authorities or other parties; and second, cognitive processes, including stereotyping and the reluctance to accept differences. The fundamental assumption underlying attitudinal conflict is the “psychology of conflict,” which serves as a reinforcing factor in the manifestation of enmity and conflict. Third, behavioral enmity and conflict refer to actions undertaken by particular parties such as the Sultan of Malacca and his Bendahara, as well as the King of Aceh and his commander within situations of enmity and conflict, with the intention of compelling opposing parties to alter or abandon their objectives. Such actions do not necessarily take the form of violence or physical coercion (Che Mat, 2019).

Behavioral enmity and conflict in the narratives of Sejarah Melayu and Hikayat Deli are prominently characterized by the imposition of coercion or pressure by one party upon another. The behavioral components in this context include signals and forms of communication intended to exert pressure on opposing parties. In line with this, it is possible to formulate a theory of conflict within these narratives. First, enmity and conflict involve a combination of diverse motives, as each conflicting party possesses competing interests. Second, enmity and conflict in the narratives of Sejarah Melayu and Hikayat Deli generate both constructive (positive) and destructive (negative) effects. Social disorder is generally associated with negative consequences, whereas the stimulation of change represents one of the positive outcomes of enmity and conflict. Such dynamics prevent Malay society or individuals within it from becoming trapped in stagnation and inertia. Therefore, according to Ali (2014) in *Memahami Riset Perilaku dan Sosial*, the narratives of Sejarah Melayu and Hikayat Deli demonstrate that enmity and conflict function as catalysts for adaptation and transformation within social systems.

#### 4. Conclusion

The foregoing discussion demonstrates the implications of incitement directed at rulers in generating enmity and conflict within classical Malay literary works, namely Sejarah Melayu and Hikayat Deli, as reflected in Malay society through these hikayat narratives. Fundamentally, such conflicts arise from mutual distrust among court elites, their tendency to act beyond the bounds of customary norms and rightful authority, and the persistence of rivalry and discord among themselves. These conditions create opportunities for exploitation by certain actors pursuing personal or group interests, as well as by those in power, such as Kitul and Sultan Iskandar Muda of Aceh. Ultimately, these dynamics originate from the lack of discernment among Malay rulers in critically assessing problems and anticipating the consequences of unfolding events.

It can be formulated that several approaches may be adopted to address incitement that leads to enmity and conflict among individuals and communities within the Malay cultural sphere. Conflict resolution operates across multiple stages, as the dynamics of enmity and conflict evolve progressively from latent conflict to manifest and potentially destructive forms. Accordingly, five stages of peaceful conflict resolution in Malay society may be outlined. First, establishing communication channels for conflicting parties to express their grievances and perspectives; second, involving a respected and capable third party to mediate and reduce tensions; third, ensuring that the conflicting parties possess the willingness to pursue peaceful resolution; fourth, applying existing norms or formulating new regulations to manage and resolve the conflict; and fifth, fostering reciprocal actions aimed at reducing pressure and promoting stability and peace.

#### 5. Acknowledgement

The completion of this article would not have been possible without the contributions of the Central Library and the Language Center of Universitas Sumatera Utara, as well as the “Hamzah Sendut” Library of Universiti Sains Malaysia. Their support in providing access to essential data and sources, including documents and scholarly materials, is gratefully acknowledged.

#### References

- Ali, M. (2014). *Memahami Riset Perilaku dan Sosial*. Bumi Akasara.
- Arsa, D. (2017). Perempuan Memberontak: Perlawanan Perempuan Minangkabau terhadap Kolonialisme Belanda di Sumatera Barat 1908-1942. *Kafa`ah: Journal of Gender Studies*, 7(1), 42. <https://doi.org/10.15548/jk.v7i1.165>
- Che Mat, S. H. (2019). *Penyelesaian Konflik dalam Kesusasteraan Melayu*. Universiti Sains Malaysia.
- Loebis, R. A. (2023). *Kearifan Bahasa dan Budaya Kemelayuan & Keindonesian*. Penerbit Jaring.
- Shellabear, W. G. (1978). *Sejarah Melayu*. Fajar Bakti.
- Suhaimi, A. A. (2017). *Novel dan Puisi dalam Kritikan Sastra*. Penerbit USM.

- Syaifuddin, W. (2018). *Dimensi Politis Hikayat Deli*. Penerbit Jaring.
- Syaifuddin, W. (2024). *Amuk Unjuk Rasa Melayu*. Penerbit Jaring.
- Syaifuddin, W. (2025). *Historiografi & Politik Melayu Sumatera Timur*. USU Press.
- Syaifuddin, W., & Syarfina, T. (2003). *Hikayat Deli*. Yandira Agung.