

Hang Tuah: a Malay icon transcending time

ABSTRACT

This article will focus discussion on the proof of the existence of Hang Tuah as a historical figure and an icon that symbolizes the Malay community's sense of heroism, valour, loyalty, uprightness, deep love for his country and king, and as a knowledgeable and universal man of the world, familiar with the customs and the ways of many foreign countries, conversant in ten world languages, a fearless warrior and a diplomat of a global standing. Hitherto many considered him to be a mere mythical figure. This article, however, will prove, using the primary and secondary data and artifacts as basis of study, that he was a living person, who had served with the greatest valour and loyalty in the court of the 15th century kingdom of Malacca. The primary data comprising firstly the official court chronicle, the *Rekidai Hōan* of the ancient Chinese Kingdom of Ryukyu, secondly the Commentaries of Great Afonso Dalboquerque: Second Viceroy of India, and thirdly the engraving on one of the walls of the remnants of ancient Indian Kingdom of Vijayanagara at Hampi, India, depicting the figure of Hang Tuah riding a horse. The secondary data comprising the *Hikayat Hang Tuah* and the *Malay Annals (Sulalatus Salatin)*, both are well-known Malay literary historical works describing fully the exploits of Hang Tuah as the super hero of the Malay world. The findings in both the primary and secondary data proved beyond any doubt the existence of Hang Tuah in history, serving as a warrior, admiral and diplomat in the 15th century Kingdom of Malacca. Further research on the sea journeys of Hang Tuah crossing seven seas, will no doubt strengthen further the character of Hang Tuah as an iconic Malay hero transcending times and ages.

Keyword: Icon; Psyche; Cultural hero; Artifacts; *Rekidai Hōan*; Afonso Dalbouquerque; Ryukyu