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Article

Fakes or Fancies? Some 'Problematic' Islamic Manuscripts from South East Asia

Annabel Teh Gallop | London

Introduction*

One of the exhibits in the 1990 British Museum exhibition *Fake? The Art of Deception* was an Old Babylonian stone inscription, purporting to be of the reign of Manishtushu, King of Akkad (c. 2276–2261 BCE), but in fact probably created several hundred years later in the first half of the second millennium BCE by priests in order to strengthen their temple's claim to privileges and revenue.¹ This was the earliest of over three hundred items on display in the exhibition, spanning some four thousand years, illustrating that the history of fakes and forgeries in art is almost as old as the written history of mankind. The exhibition catalogue by Jones provides an excellent overview of the subject, and shows that there is an enormous variety of motivations for producing fakes, not always financial; that great experts have regularly been fooled; that fakes can be successful both when presented as typical examples of a genre and as exceptions to the rule; and that there are many objects that continue to defy categorisation. In this article I will not pursue the theoretical, philosophical and ethical issues surrounding fakes and forgeries, but will simply aim to identify and describe a number of 'problematic' manuscripts written in Arabic script from the Malay world of South East Asia, in the hope that a codicological and contextual analysis will help to allow them to be appreciated for what they are, and not for what they are not.

The maritime world of South East Asia is home to hundreds of languages, but only a small number are associated

with writing traditions. Although a few isolated manuscripts written on perishable materials are known to survive from the fourteenth through to the sixteenth centuries, in general manuscripts from insular South East Asia only date from the seventeenth century onwards, with the great majority deriving from the nineteenth century. No indigenous scripts are known from South East Asia, and all extant inscriptions and manuscripts from the region are written either in scripts of Indic origin or in extended forms of the Arabic alphabet, with some languages such as Javanese and Bugis yielding manuscript traditions in both script families. Amongst the most important languages with manuscripts written in scripts of Indic origin are Javanese, Sundanese, Madurese, Balinese, Bugis, Makassar, Lampung and the Batak family, while those in Arabic-derived scripts include Malay, Acehnese, Minangkabau, Javanese, Madurese, Wolio, Tausug and Maguindanao. But one of the most significant languages in terms of numbers of manuscripts produced in this now predominantly Muslim region is Arabic, while the very small numbers of Sanskrit manuscripts found today perhaps attest to a similar role for that canonical language in an earlier era.

This article focuses solely on 'Islamic' manuscripts from South East Asia, namely those manuscripts written in Arabic script, containing texts in Arabic and Malay, and occasionally in Javanese. The indelible association between Islam and the Arabic script – the vehicle for the word of God in the Qur'an – lends itself to a widespread and convenient market perception of all manuscripts written in forms of the Arabic script as inherently 'Islamic', irrespective of their contents. Thus a manuscript of the *Hikayat Perang Pandawa Jaya* – the story of the final fight of the Pandawa brothers from the *Mahabharata* – written on paper, in Malay in the extended form of Arabic script known as Jawi, might easily appear in an auction sale in London of Islamic manuscripts, while a manuscript of the *Serat Yusup*, the Muslim story of the

* This is a revised and extended version of a paper entitled 'Fakes or fancies? some "problematic" Malay-world manuscripts', presented at the ASEASUK Conference, Asian Studies Centre, St. Antony's College, Oxford, 15-17 September 2006. I believe it has benefitted greatly from the long period of gestation between initial presentation and publication, a period of intense market activity in the world of Islamic manuscripts. I acknowledge with thanks permission to reproduce images from the respective holding institutions and individuals.

¹ Jones 1990, 60.

Prophet Joseph, written on palm leaf in Javanese language and the Javanese script which is of Indic script, would attract little interest in the international Islamic art market. And it is indeed the rapid expansion of the international market in Islamic art over the past three decades that has precipitated the writing of this article. Since the early 1980s, there has been a global rise of interest in Islamic art and manuscripts, with London emerging as the centre, with twice-yearly sales of Islamic art at the auction houses of Sotheby's, Christie's and Bonhams (previously Philips), and commensurate activity amongst private dealers and booksellers.

This surge of interest in London was mirrored by a similar flurry of activity on the other side of the world, due to the collecting activities of two large institutions in Malaysia. In the early 1980s, the Department for Islamic Affairs (Bahagian Hal Ehwal Islam, BAHEIS) – now known as the Department for the Propagation of Islam (Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia, JAKIM) – in the Prime Minister's Department of Malaysia embarked on an ambitious project to collect Islamic cultural artefacts including manuscripts. More than 3,600 manuscripts in Arabic, Malay and other languages were acquired in a relatively short period, including over 300 Qur'ans, mainly from South East Asia.² Since 1998 the JAKIM collection has been on loan to the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia (IAMM), Kuala Lumpur.³ The second important event was the foundation in 1984 of the Malay Manuscripts Centre (Pusat Manuskrip Melayu)⁴ at the National Library of Malaysia (Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia, PNM), whose collection now numbers over 4,700 manuscripts primarily in Malay, but including about 40 Qur'ans. Other smaller institutions in South East Asia, as well as a number of private collectors, also actively began to acquire Islamic manuscripts in the 1980s and 1990s. In Indonesia, a major revival of interest can be traced to the Festival Istiqlal held in Jakarta in 1991, which included the first major exhibition of Qur'an manuscripts from the archipelago.

In contrast to older collections of Malay manuscripts in Malaysia such as those held in the Language and Literature Bureau (Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, DBP) and

University of Malaya (Universiti Malaya) Library which were predominantly of literary, historical and legal texts, these newly collected manuscripts from the Malay world were very different in character. The great majority were strongly Islamic in content, with a high proportion written in Arabic, comprising theological works as well as copies of the Qur'an and prayer books. Many of the manuscripts – particularly in the JAKIM collection – came from the north-eastern states of the Malay peninsula, namely Terengganu, Kelantan and the culturally Malay-Muslim region of Patani in southern Thailand, while the PNM also acquired a considerable number of manuscripts from Aceh in north Sumatra. The third significant source was Java, another area where manuscripts in Arabic script were plentiful, coexisting temporally alongside manuscripts written in Javanese script on both paper and palm leaf.

Although the majority of manuscripts which entered public collections in Malaysia around this time were clearly acquired from private collections within the communities in which the books had been produced and consumed, around the early years of this century I became aware of a number of puzzling manuscripts which for various reasons did not comply with expected characteristics. In some cases there were 'genuine' surprises, with writing formats and texts that had never been encountered before and which served to extend our understanding of the writing traditions of the Malay world. For example, a number of Malay manuscripts from Patani and Kelantan, on the periphery of the Thai tradition, were written on locally-made paper in the accordion folding-book format characteristic of Thai manuscripts.⁵ But in other cases, I became increasingly certain that at least some manuscripts had been manufactured or at least 'processed' in some way to meet market demand. These 'problematic' manuscripts will be discussed in more detail below in two main categories, firstly of 'new manuscripts' created within the past few decades, and secondly of 'enhanced manuscripts', namely genuine old manuscripts which have been embellished recently, whether by the addition of decoration or text.

A. New manuscripts

The primary meaning of the word 'manuscript' is simply a book or document written by hand and not printed, and

² IAMM 2010, 6; Ali 1997, 109 n. 4.

³ Manuscripts from the JAKIM collection now held in IAMM can easily be identified by their shelfmarks beginning '1998'.

⁴ Now renamed the National Centre for Malay Manuscripts (Pusat Kebangsaan Manuskrip Melayu).

⁵ On the format of traditional Thai manuscripts see Ginsburg 2000, 8, May and Igunma 2018, 17, 25; for images of Malay manuscripts in folding-book format held in PNM see National Library 2002b, 33, 170.

does not carry with it any intrinsic implication of age or importance. My shopping list scribbled yesterday in pencil on a piece of paper is no less authentic a 'manuscript' than one written in ink on papyrus two thousand years ago. The significance of any manuscript thus depends entirely on its content, material form and context – the coherence and rarity of the text, aesthetic features, the date and place of writing, and identity of the author and scribe – established through philological, codicological and socio-cultural analysis.

In 2002 I viewed a small exhibition at the Handicraft Museum (Muzium Kraftangan) in Kuala Lumpur of a collection of manuscripts said to have come from an Islamic museum in Langkawi that had recently closed down.⁶ Included in the display was a very unusual illuminated manuscript containing a compilation of *ḥadīth* (traditions of the Prophet Muhammad), with the two open pages displaying a *ḥadīth* according to al-Bazzār, confirmed by al-Ḥakīm, presented in four versions: in Arabic, in Malay in Jawi script, in romanised Malay, and in English (Fig. 1). From the style of the roman-script handwriting, the use of English, and the unusual combination of languages and scripts, it can be surmised that this beautiful book was probably written in the post-war period around the 1950s or 1960s, and is unlikely to be mistaken for a product of an earlier era.

There are however a considerable number of South East Asian manuscripts of recent production which are much more difficult to distinguish from older examples. In Bali, patrons still occasionally commission copies of holy texts written in Sanskrit, Old Javanese and Balinese on palm leaf for presentation to temples, in an unbroken continuation of older traditions. The Festival Istiqlal held in Jakarta in 1991 saw the launching of the copying of the Mushaf Istiqlal, the 'national' Indonesian Qur'an, with each of its thirty sections (*juz*) decorated with designs representing a different province, which appears to have sparked a renaissance in the hand-copying of complete Qur'ans in Indonesia. In recent years a considerable number of high-profile Qur'an manuscripts have been copied in different provinces of Indonesia, such as the Mushaf Sundawi in 1997, Mushaf Jakarta in 2000, Mushaf Kalimantan Barat in 2002, Mushaf al-Bantani in 2010 and Mushaf Jambi in 2015,⁷ as well as more individual efforts. In Jakarta in 2003, alongside a display of mostly nineteenth

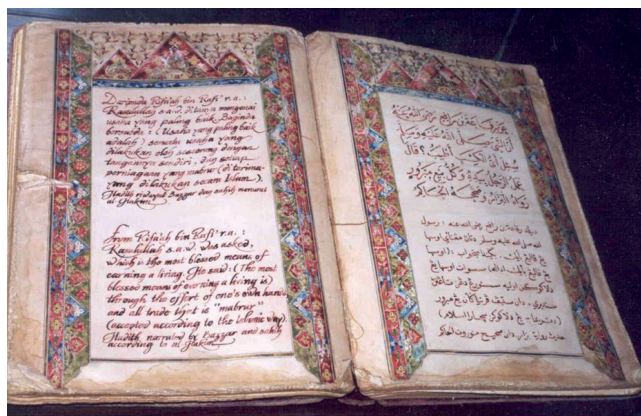


Fig. 1: A manuscript collection of *ḥadīth* (prophetic traditions) presented in Romanised Malay, English, Arabic and Malay in Jawi script, probably mid-20th century, seen at the Muzium Kraftangan, Kuala Lumpur, 2002.

century Qur'an manuscripts from the collection of the late Haji Masagung, I was shown a complete Qur'an which, according to the custodian Haji Thabrany Aziz, had recently been copied by a lady in Jakarta as an act of piety.⁸

All the manuscripts described above make no claim to be anything other than contemporary creations. However, I will now present below a number of manuscripts which, tacitly or otherwise, appear to have been written in the heyday of manuscript production in island South East Asia – in other words, prior to the first decades of the twentieth century – but which in fact are much more recent productions.

A.1 Recent 'traditional' manuscripts

In this group are manuscripts which in general appearance are typical products of the Malay manuscript era, but which on closer inspection turn out to be very recent creations. Probably belonging to this category are two Malay manuscripts in the British Library (BL), which were acquired at the London auction house Bonhams in 2005.⁹ According to the vendor, he had recently bought these manuscripts from 'Malay' students outside the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus.

The first manuscript, BL Or.16128, *Hikayat Raja Khandak dan Raja Badar*, has a colophon dated 9 Rabiul Awal 1224 (24 April 1809) in *negeri* Reman (or Raman), one of the principalities of Patani (Fig. 2). The manuscript is written in a neat but slightly jerky hand in black ink with red rubrics, on cream laid paper with vertical chainlines but with no visible watermark. It has some water staining around the edges and

⁶ I have not been able to find out anything more about this museum, or the present whereabouts of the manuscripts.

⁷ With thanks to Ali Akbar for this information.

⁸ Viewed in the Wali Songo bookshop, Jalan Kwitang, Jakarta, in June 2003.

⁹ Bonhams 2005, 41, lot 96–97.

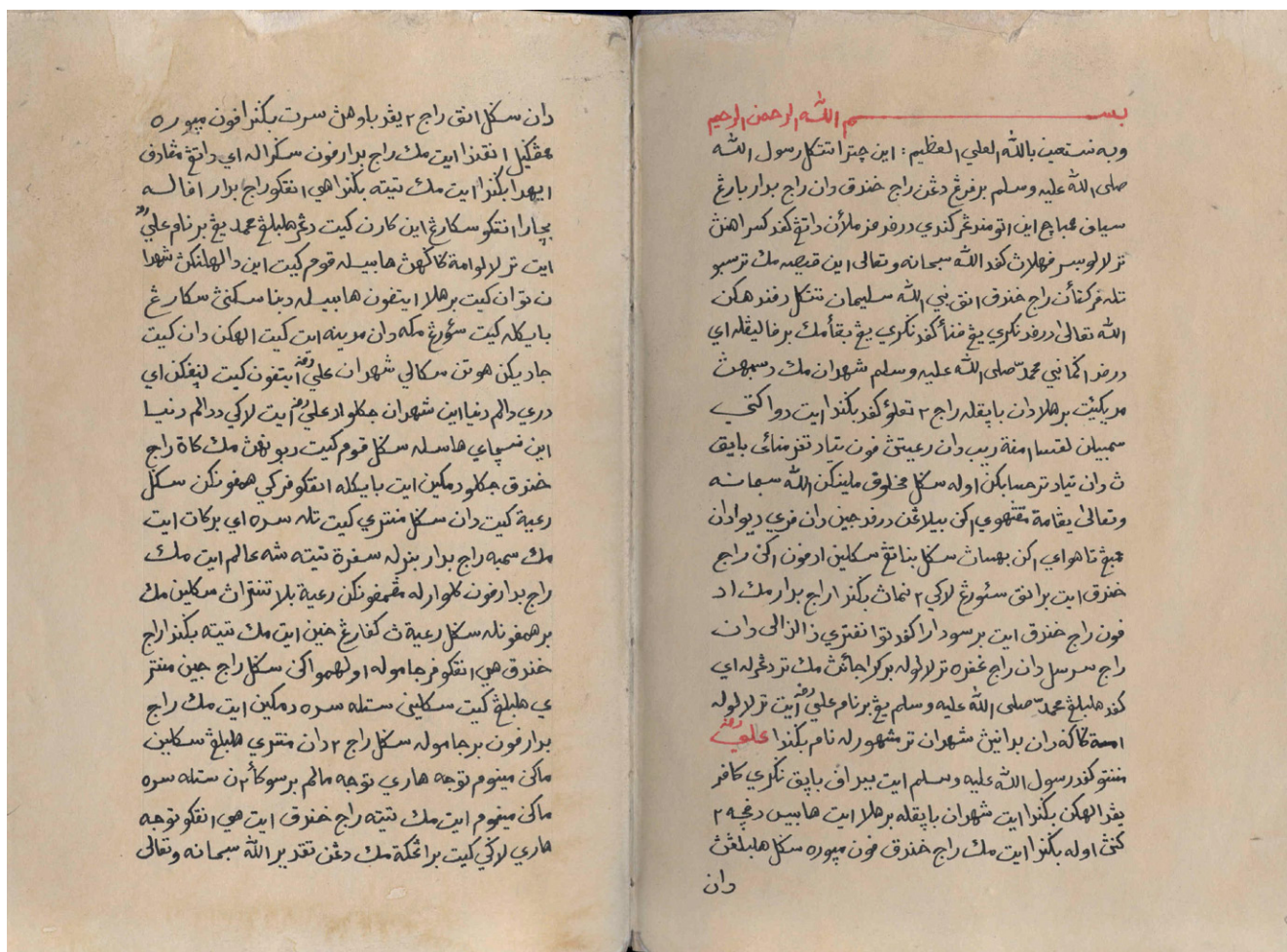


Fig. 2: *Hikayat Raja Khandak dan Raja Badar*, in Malay in Jawi script. British Library, Or. 16128, fols 1^v-2^r.

is bound in a modern dark blue buckram binding. The hand appears to be quite modern, with slight bleeding from the text suggesting the use of a felt-tip pen. The most unusual feature though is that rubricated words have been written in red ink above a pencil outline (Fig. 3). This suggests that the present manuscript was copied from another source, and followed the same pattern of rubrication. While copying out the text the scribe noted words to be rubricated in pencil, and then returned to these places and overwrote the pencilled outlines in red ink. Although rubrication is very common in traditional Malay manuscripts, there are almost never signs of pencil outlines; instead, the scribe wrote directly in red ink. These pencil outlines therefore suggest a manuscript copied outside the mainstream of the manuscript tradition.

The second manuscript acquired from the same source, BL Or. 16129, consists of only 11 folios and contains an unidentified religious work (or fragment of a work) by Imām Aḥmad (the Sunni jurist Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal, 780–855), set within frames with a commentary written in the margins. The

main text is dated 24 Muḥarram 1[2]60 (14 February 1844) in Mecca. This manuscript is also written in a small neat hand with a ‘modern’ feel, but in this case modern influences are clearly manifest in the use of certain punctuation features such as brackets and numbered points within the text, indicating a date of production in the twentieth century and perhaps even suggesting that the manuscript might have been copied from a printed source text (Fig. 4).

Thus a general inference can be made on palaeographical grounds that both these manuscripts are very recent copies of older sources, and have reproduced verbatim the colophons in their sources. This is by no means an unusual scenario; many manuscripts from the Malay world are encountered with colophons that give a date which for codicological reasons (perhaps the use of dated or dateable watermarked paper) evidently predates the date of the manuscript, and therefore can be assumed to apply to the source text rather than the present copy. For example, the British Library holds two copies of the Malay narrative poem *Syair Jaran Tamasa*,

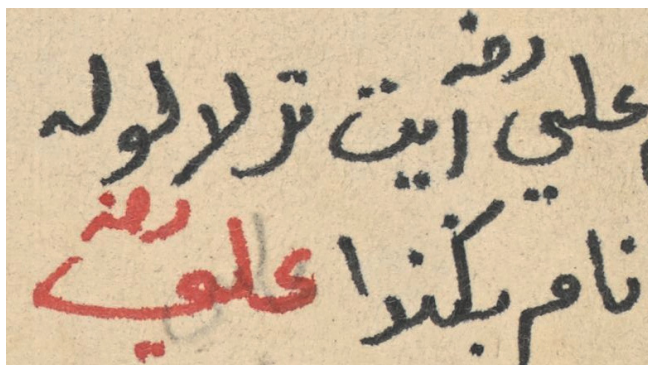


Fig. 3: Pencil outline visible beneath rubricated word 'Ali', from *Hikayat Raja Khandak*. British Library, Or. 16128, fol.1^r (detail).

one with a colophon stating it was copied by Ismail on 29 Muḥarram 1219 (10 May 1804), and another manuscript evidently copied from the former, reproducing exactly the same colophon and date, but then continuing to state that the present copy had been made for Raffles by Muhammad Bakhar.¹⁰ What is slightly perturbing though about the two manuscripts discussed above is apparent traces of physical attempts to create the impression that the manuscripts are older than they actually are. Both are written on robust laid paper (without watermark) which is far more discoloured than proportionate with the good condition of the paper itself, leading to a suspicion that the paper was deliberately stained before the writing of the text, to produce a manuscript with the patina of age.

Does this understanding affect our perception of the value of the manuscripts? Little can be said at present about the manuscript containing the work by Imām Aḥmad until the text in the manuscript has been identified. The *Hikayat Raja Khandak*, on the other hand, is a very popular Malay tale set during the early wars of Islam, with versions also known in Javanese, Sundanese, Acehnese and Makasarese.¹¹ At least 24 Malay manuscripts of this work are known from collections in Indonesia and Europe,¹² copied in a wide range of locations, including Semarang,¹³ Kampung Boyan

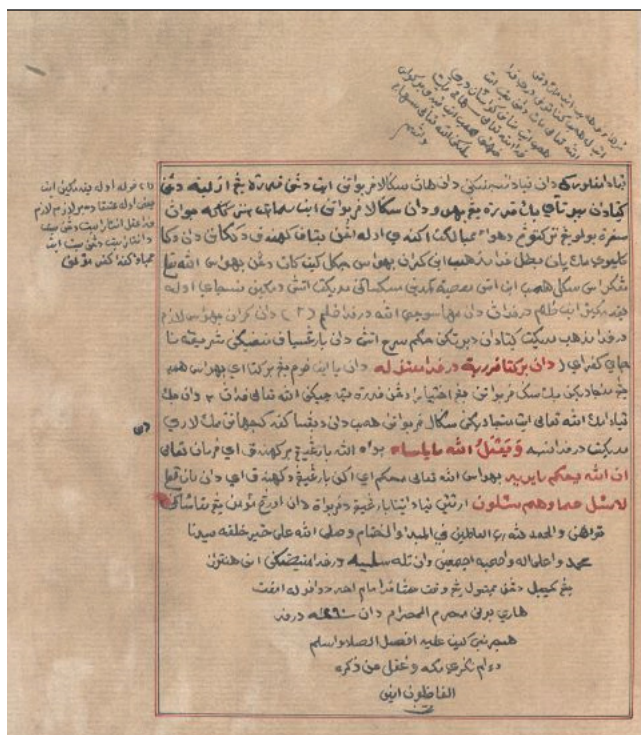


Fig. 4: Colophon of text in Malay by Imām Aḥmad, with use of brackets evident in line 6. British Library, Or. 16129, fol. 11^r (detail).

in Singapore¹⁴ and Batavia.¹⁵ However no other copies are known from Patani, and thus the present manuscript – even if itself a very recent copy – is of great value in testifying to the presence of this story in the northern Malay peninsula in the early nineteenth century.

A.2 Manuscripts of the *Sejarah Patani*, 'History of Patani'

The suggestion that BL, Or. 16129 may have been copied from a printed source leads on to the presentation of a very distinctive and flamboyant group of five Malay manuscripts, identified in catalogues as histories of Patani. In fact, all five manuscripts contain the text (or part) of the work entitled *Sejarah Kerajaan Melayu Patani*, 'The History of the Malay kingdom of Patani,' by 'Ibrahim Syukri', which is believed to be the pen name used by a number of writers associated with Patani separatist circles in Malaya in the 1950s,¹⁶ which was published by the Majlis Ugama Islam

¹⁰ Gallop 2015.

¹¹ Wieringa 1998, 91.

¹² Wijaya 2008, 10–12.

¹³ BL Or. 14350.

¹⁴ CUL Add. 3772.

¹⁵ LUB Cod.Or. 7324.

¹⁶ Jory 2013, xv.



Fig. 5: *Sejarah Patani*, with illuminated headpiece. PNM, MS 2632.

Press in Pasir Putih, Kelantan in 1958.¹⁷ This typeset book in Jawi script presents a nationalist local Malay view of the history of Patani up to the post-war period, with the last date mentioned in the text being 1950.¹⁸ The manuscript copies thus, by definition, date from the second half of the twentieth century. The five manuscripts noted are all remarkable for their fanciful decoration, generally utilising non-traditional motifs, structures, palette and pigments, and, in two cases, for their unusual formats not encountered in any 'authentic' Malay manuscripts: DBP MS 20¹⁹ is written in ink on strips of bamboo (discussed further in section A.3.2 below), while a manuscript in Leiden University Library, LUB Cod. Or.26541,²⁰ is written on sheets of thick parchment bound into codex form. The other three copies, which are all paper codices with elaborate decoration, are PNM MSS 809,²¹



Fig. 6: *Sejarah Patani*, with an illuminated genealogical chart. DBP, MS 181.

PNM MSS 2632 (Fig. 5),²² and DBP MS 181 (Fig. 6). To date, none of the contents of these manuscripts have been investigated to identify the exact portions of text contained, who the scribes and artists were, and exactly where the copies were produced.

A.3 Recent 'untraditional' manuscripts

Maritime South East Asia is home to a wide variety of languages and manuscript formats, yet some types of media are only associated with certain languages. Recent decades though have seen the appearance of a number of Malay and Arabic manuscripts which – like the two manuscripts of *Sejarah Patani* mentioned above – appear to have been consciously created in strange formats and using unusual materials, and some of these categories will be presented below.

A.3.1 Tree bark

Tree bark is a traditional medium for Batak manuscripts from north Sumatra, and also to a lesser extent for Lampung manuscripts from south Sumatra, both written in scripts of Indic origin, reading from left to right.²³ Such manuscripts are written on long strips of tree bark which are then folded accordion-style to form books, sometimes provided with a wooden cover. However tree bark is rarely used for Arabic

¹⁷ An English translation was published by Connor and Miksic (Ibrahim 1985). A facsimile of the Malay Jawi text with a romanised transliteration, edited by Hasrom Haron and Mohd. Zambari A. Malek, was published in 2002 (Ibrahim 2002); according to the editors the copy they used had a stamp on the cover stating that the book was issued on 15 October 1958 (Ibrahim 2002, 10).

¹⁸ Ibrahim 2002, 120; Ibrahim 1985, 94.

¹⁹ The manuscript is described in Kamariah and Wan Salhah 2006, 27-28, and an image is reproduced in National Library of Malaysia 2014, 24.

²⁰ Acquired in 2005 from Haji Azahar of Kuala Lumpur; no further information is known about this vendor.

²¹ An image of this manuscript is reproduced in National Library of Malaysia 2006, 90-91; Katalog 2014, 50.

²² An image of this manuscript is reproduced in National Library of Malaysia 2014, 51.

²³ See Kozok 1996, Durie 1996.

script,²⁴ while the use of single folios of tree bark sewn into codex form – as found in the Malay manuscript described below – is not encountered in any known South East Asian manuscript tradition.

- PNM, MS 1319, *Cerita Nabi Muhammad*, 'Stories of the Prophet Muhammad,' written in Malay in Jawi script, in black ink, on sheets of tree bark sewn together and bound in codex form.²⁵

A.3.2 Bamboo

Bamboo – either in the form of complete sections of the cane, or split into thin strips – is a traditional medium for Batak manuscripts and also for Lampung and Malay texts written in Indic *rencong* script from south Sumatra.²⁶ In bamboo manuscripts, the text is incised onto the bamboo with a sharp implement and then blackened. Sometimes the bamboo strips are threaded together with a string through a hole at one end. Within South East Asian manuscript traditions, bamboo is never used for Arabic script; manuscripts on bamboo are never written in ink with a pen; the use of pigmented decoration on bamboo is unknown; and the technique of stringing strips of bamboo like a Venetian blind (though encountered in Burmese palm-leaf manuscripts)²⁷ is never found in the archipelago. All these 'untraditional' features are encountered in the two manuscripts described below.

- PNM, MS 1323, *Kitab tibb*, a work on traditional medicine and healing, in Malay in Jawi script, written in black and red ink on strips of bamboo, 6 lines per strip, with floral cartouches at each end in yellow, red and black. Each strip of bamboo has two holes at each end enabling the strips to be threaded together like a Venetian blind. The first and final strip are shaped with a gentle protrusion on one of the long horizontal sides.²⁸

²⁴ See e. g. Durie 1996, 249. Another rare example originates from the periphery of the Batak tradition: a letter in Malay in Jawi script, written on tree bark folded accordion-style, and bearing a lampblack seal impression, nineteenth century; formerly in the collection of the now-closed Nijmeegs Volkenkunde Museum, ET 48-2-33, viewed in 2000.

²⁵ An image of this manuscript is reproduced in National Library of Malaysia 2002b, 15.

²⁶ Kozok 1996, 234, 236; Durie 1996, 250-251.

²⁷ For images of Burmese palm-leaf manuscripts strung like Venetian blinds see May and Igunma 2018, 164, 238.

²⁸ An image of this manuscript is reproduced in National Library of Malaysia 2002b, 12, 16, 17; National Library of Malaysia 2014, 34.

- DBP, MS 20, *Hikayat Patani*, 'Story of Patani', in Malay in Jawi script, written in black and red ink on 28 strips of bamboo, 8 lines per strip, with floral motifs at each end of the strip, and at the beginning of the text. Two holes at each end, so the manuscript is threaded together like a Venetian blind.²⁹

A.3.3 Palm leaf

Palm leaf (*lontar*) was a standard writing support through much of South East Asia for over a millennium, probably having been introduced through Indian influence. Many thousands of palm-leaf manuscripts survive from Java, Madura, Bali and Lombok, and the medium is still in use in Bali today.³⁰ However, all palm-leaf manuscripts are written in scripts of Indic origin, from left to right. Arabic script is hardly ever used on palm leaf, save for one or two short notes or letters. Therefore the manuscripts described below, most of them in codex form with folios comprising stitched-together palm leaves, on which Arabic script is incised, are nothing short of outlandish, and suggest simply an intention to create something fancy or 'different for the sake of difference' (*supaya lain daripada yang lain*).

- PNM MS 931, *Kitab mawlid*, texts in praise of the Prophet Muhammad, manuscript written in ink on palm leaves sewn together with zigzag stitching along their horizontal sides and then bound into codex form, with initial decorated double frames.³¹
- Qur'an manuscript, each folio made up of 16 palm leaves, with three lines of text per leaf, stitched together at each end and through the middle, and then bound into a codex, with an Islamic-style leather binding with envelope flap (photographs sent from Christie's, London, 2004).
- Four Qur'an manuscripts, each made up of palm leaves stitched together at each end and through the middle, and then bound into codex form, seen at a Qur'an festival in Jakarta in 2011 (Akbar 2013b).
- Qur'an manuscript, with 60 folios, each folio made up of 16 palm leaves, with two lines of text per leaf, stitched

²⁹ An image of this manuscript is reproduced in National Library of Malaysia 2014, 24.

³⁰ On the production and preparation of *lontar* leaves, see Rubinstein 1996, 136-137.

³¹ An image of this manuscript is reproduced in National Library of Malaysia 1990, 12.



Fig. 7: Detail of a Qur'an manuscript written on *lontar* leaves. Collection of Abdul Raman Bahrom.

together at each end and through the middle, and then bound into a codex, 'dated AH 1331 (1912–13 CE),' sold in London at Bonhams, *Islamic and Indian art*, 21 April 2015, lot 3.³²

- Qur'an manuscript on *lontar*, with three lines of text per leaf, containing 7 *sūras*, not stitched and bound in codex form but strung at the two ends like a Venetian blind, and stored in a box; acquired from a dealer in Pekan Baru who said the manuscript was from Aceh and dated from the eighteenth–nineteenth century (Fig. 7).³³

A.3.4 Wooden boards

In some parts of the Islamic world, notably sub-Saharan Africa, wooden boards are a standard writing support, using a special charcoal ink that can easily be washed off.³⁴ When two American missionaries visited Brunei in 1837, they noted that verses (*syair*) were 'generally written upon a piece of board, whose breadth corresponds to the length of a verse, as paper is very scarce among them.'³⁵ However, very few Islamic writing boards from the Malay world which can be authenticated are known, apart from three from Minandanao acquired in the first decade of the twentieth century and now

held in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.,³⁶ and perhaps one held in Kerinci in central Sumatra.³⁷ Therefore it is difficult to gauge the authenticity of a few recently acquired writing boards noted in Malaysian institutions.

- PNM, MS 1322, wooden writing board with Qur'anic verses.³⁸

A.3.5 Oversized Qur'an manuscripts

In September 2002, on a visit to the Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah Islamic Exhibition Gallery at the State Mufti's Office in Brunei, in the room reserved for manuscripts from the Malay world I noticed a 'massive' Qur'an. Consulting my hand-written notes from that date, I find that I wrote 'not *asli*' (i.e. not authentic). Then in February 2007 I was sent images from the San Francisco Book Fair of two enormous Qur'an manuscripts from Indonesia, said to have come out of Aceh after the tsunami of 2004 (Fig. 8). And by 2012 Ali Akbar had recorded over ten (*belasan*) such oversized Qur'ans in Indonesia, some held in museum collections while others are said to have 'appeared' in mysterious circumstances, as noted below.³⁹

The first such case recorded by Ali Akbar occurred in April 2009, when a giant Qur'an with folios measuring 200 × 103 cm, was said to have 'suddenly appeared' in front of the Masjid Dua Kalimat Syahadat ('Mosque of the two sentences of the declaration of faith') in the hamlet (*dusun*) of Babakan, part of the village (*desa*) of Bojongleles, in the district (*kecamatan*) of Cibadak, regency (*kabupaten*) of Lebak, in the province (*propinsi*) of Banten in West Java. A team was sent from the Ministry of Religious Affairs to inspect the Qur'an, and due to numerous deficiencies in the Qur'anic text (omissions and repetitions), the Ministry recommended that the Qur'an be 'secured' by the appropriate authorities so as not to cause religious dissent.⁴⁰ In another case, on 12 August 2012 the newspaper *Media Indonesia* carried a photo and report of a very large Qur'an held in a *pesantren* (madrasah) in Bogor, said to have been written on banana leaves by a son of Sunan Bonang (one of the *wali*

³² For an image of this manuscript see: <<http://www.bonhams.com/auctions/22813/lot/3/?category=list&length=10&page=1>>.

³³ Abu Dervish 2013.

³⁴ Bondarev and Löhr 2011, 61.

³⁵ Lay 1839, 202.

³⁶ Gallop 2011b.

³⁷ Digitised through the Endangered Archives Programme, EAP117/46/2/20.

³⁸ An image of this manuscript is reproduced in National Library of Malaysia 2002b, 14.

³⁹ Documented by Ali Akbar in his blog *Khazanah Mushaf al-Qur'an Nusantara* <<http://quran-nusantara.blogspot.co.uk/>> in a series of posts entitled *Qur'an kuno-kunoan*, 'Pseudo-ancient Qur'ans', Akbar 2012–2015.

⁴⁰ Akbar 2012, 2013a.



Fig. 8: Very large Qur'an manuscript, offered for sale at the San Francisco Book Fair, February 2007.

songo, the nine saints credited with bringing Islam to Java in the fifteenth century) and presented by Moro Muslims from the southern Philippines.⁴¹ And on 12 January 2015, *Tribunnews* posted on its Facebook page a report of a giant Qur'an suddenly appearing in a room in the house of a religious scholar, Ustadz Anang Asriyanto, in the village of Glagah Arum, district of Porong, near Sidoarjo in East Java; within the next 14 hours, the post was shared nearly two million times.⁴² In 2012 Ali Akbar was also telephoned by someone from Cirebon, offering him a Qur'an said to have 'suddenly appeared after a group of religious scholars performed ascetic practices (*tirakat*) at the tomb of Sunan Gunung Jati' (another of the *wali songo*).⁴³

Ali had a chance to inspect several of these oversize Qur'ans in person, and others from photographic reproductions. All the Qur'ans were written with felt-tip pen (*spidol*) on brown cardboard paper known in Indonesia as *kertas semen* or *kertas samson*, and were generally poorly calligraphed and carelessly executed, with frequent unorthodox word breaks. Nonetheless, the manuscripts reflected features of the manuscript tradition

no longer present in modern printed Qur'ans – for example, the absence of numbering of verses, and the placement of illuminated frames at the beginning, middle and end of the volume – which suggested that these undoubtedly new manuscripts were copied from traditional manuscript sources, rather than from modern printed copies.⁴⁴

B. Enhanced manuscripts

Many manuscripts evince multiple layers of history. Typical examples might include a twelfth-century manuscript text with marginal annotations from the fifteenth century, a sixteenth-century Mughal manuscript with added miniatures from the eighteenth century, or a seventeenth-century Safavid manuscript re-set in new decorated borders in the nineteenth century. A good example is one of the greatest treasures of the Persian collection in the British Library, a manuscript of the *Khamsah* of Nizāmī (d. 1202/3), Or. 2265, which is described as follows:

Originally copied for the Safavid ruler Shāh Tahmāsp (r. 1524–76) between 1535 and 1543, it was augmented by the addition of 14 full page illustrations by some of the most famous court artists of the mid-sixteenth century. Further pages were inserted probably during the seventeenth century,

⁴¹ Akbar 2013c.

⁴² Akbar 2015.

⁴³ Akbar 2012.

⁴⁴ Akbar 2013a, 2014.



Fig. 9: Coloured-in tailpiece from a manuscript of *Hidāyat al-Ḥabīb* from Aceh. PNM, MS 2654.

and again at a later stage, perhaps when the manuscript was rebound in the early nineteenth century at the court of Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh Qājār (r. 1797–1834). Includes three paintings by the artist Muḥammad Zamān (fl. 1649–1704).⁴⁵

In a South East Asian context, a recent study by Mulaika Hijjas (2017) of a Sufi compendium from West Sumatra has identified multiple layers of marginal annotations, ranging in date from possibly the eighteenth century to the twentieth century. In all these cases, our evaluation of the value and significance of the manuscript depends on an accurate understanding of the dates and chronological ordering of its constituent elements. Equally important is our assessment of the motivation and intent for the subsequent additions or enhancements, whether for reasons of scholarship, conservation, beautification or deliberate manipulation, the latter most commonly for commercial gain, but sometimes for other, less evident, motives.

Presented below are examples of such 'hybrid' manuscripts, which are in essence authentic manuscripts, mostly written in the nineteenth or occasionally eighteenth century, which have been 'enhanced' by the addition of either decoration or text. The manuscripts can be discussed in two groups: those with graphic enhancements in the form of added

illumination (purely decorative ornamentation composed of vegetal or geometric motifs) or illustration (pictorial images that usually relate to accompanying texts), and those with textual enhancements. Nearly all the graphically enhanced Islamic manuscripts from maritime South East Asia which have been identified originate from Java, but a few examples are also known from Aceh and Patani.

B.1 Graphic enhancements

B.1.1 Aceh

Among manuscripts illuminated in the Acehnese style, a sizeable minority are decorated with monochrome frames, where the ornamental frames are drawn in black ink but left uncoloured.⁴⁶ Of such manuscripts, there are also a small number which are partially coloured, suggesting that it was also common for colour to be added at a later stage. However, in all 'genuine' illuminated Acehnese manuscripts, the application of colour to decorated elements follows a well-established protocol: the palette is essentially limited to red, black, and yellow, with the main motif – a plaited border, a trailing vine, or a lotus-shaped bud – always picked out in 'reserved white', namely the plain paper background, contrasting with pigment applied to surrounding elements. Therefore, a manuscript of the *Hidāyat al-ḥabīb fī al-targhīb wal-tarhīb* (PNM, MS 2654) by Nuruddin al-Raniri appears rather unusual, as the decorated headpiece and tailpiece are coloured in strong crude pigments applied to solid sections (Fig. 9). We can surmise that this is an original nineteenth-century manuscript with monochrome headpiece and tailpiece, which were very recently coloured in.

B.1.2 Patani

Three manuscripts from Patani have been identified which have probably been enhanced. One of these is a work by Syaikh Daud bin Abdullah al-Fatani, *Idāḥ al-bāb li-murīd al-nikāḥ bil-ṣawāb* (PNM, MS 2412). *Kitab Jawi* – referring to the corpus of texts in Arabic and Malay comprising the curriculum for religious studies – from Patani are generally characterised by very neat text blocks with wide margins, often with dense marginalia.⁴⁷ The majority of manuscripts do not have text frames, but when present these tend to be minimal, comprising two thin ruled lines in red or purple. In PNM, MS 2412, the crude tailpiece and colourful and

⁴⁵ Description of BL, Or. 2265 by Ursula Sims-Williams, <<http://blogs.bl.uk/asian-and-african/persian.html>>.

⁴⁶ Gallop 2004, 200.

⁴⁷ Images of many such manuscripts are reproduced in Ismail 2002.



Fig. 10: Fine double illuminated frames at the beginning of a Patani Qur'an. PNM 3236.



Fig. 11: Crude double decorated frames recently added to the final pages of a Patani Qur'an. PNM 3236.



Fig. 12: Opening frames of an East Coast Qur'an. IAMM 1998.1.3537.

unusual ruled text frames in red, yellow and purple, enclosing an inner border filled with star-shaped motifs, appear to be recent additions. On very close inspection, it is apparent that this manuscript did have original text frames of two ruled thin red lines, which have now been overcoloured with yellow.

The second example is a Qur'an (PNM MSS 3236)⁴⁸ with a very fine initial double decorated frame in typical Patani style (Fig. 10).⁴⁹ In contrast with illuminated Qur'ans in the Terengganu style which may have decorated frames at beginning, end and also in the middle of the text, Patani-style Qur'ans generally only have illuminated frames at the start of the Holy Book. In this Qur'an however, very crude decorated Patani-style frames in gold, orange and blue in what appear to be modern pigments have been added to the final two pages (Fig. 11).

While the decorated frames at the end of the manuscript discussed above were probably added very recently, a third enhanced Qur'an manuscript from the East Coast of the Malay peninsula is more enigmatic. This Qur'an (IAMM 1998.1.3537) is in size and text format a typical Terengganu Qur'an, with the expected text frames and fine red leather Islamic-style binding with envelope flap, stamped gold frames and medallions, and colourful Indian cotton doublures,⁵⁰ but with atypical illumination with sinuous curves and tendrils reminiscent of *Art Nouveau*. The initial double decorated frames are in the shape of two oval cartouches, surrounded with foliate garlands, and with bud-shaped finials at top and bottom and on the outer midpoint (Fig. 12). Such a composition is alien to the known, and highly conventionalised, traditions of Qur'anic illumination in South East Asia. At the end of the manuscript is a sinuous foliate tailpiece which, although conforming to the general Islamic principle of a tapered triangular shape, is also

⁴⁸ An image of this manuscript is reproduced in National Library of Malaysia 2006, 11.

⁴⁹ Cf. Gallop 2005, 119.

⁵⁰ On general features of Terengganu Qur'ans see Gallop 2005 and 2012a, and for similar bindings see IAMM 2017, 127–129.



Fig. 13: Final tailpiece of an East Coast Qur'an. IAMM 1998.1.3537.

non-traditional in form, for one of the key artistic principles in illumination in Islamic manuscripts from the East Coast of the Malay peninsula is the containment of decorative elements within clearly defined regular outlines, whether undulating or ogival arches or more rigidly geometric enclosures such as triangles, circles or rectangles (Fig. 13). Moreover, tapered tailpieces are never normally found in illuminated East Coast Qur'ans; if illumination is present at the end of the Holy Book, this is always in the form of double decorated frames.

Indeed, a codicological examination of the physical structure of this manuscript shows clearly that the initial and final sections have been bound in at a later date (Fig. 14), as shown too by a comparison of the colour of the paper,⁵¹ and the fact that the round verse markers and the text frames



Fig. 14: Headband of the East Coast Qur'an, clearly showing bound-in additions at the beginning and end of the book. IAMM 1998.1.3537.

lack the yellow pigment found in the main part of the codex. However the quality of the handwriting of the later additions is totally commensurate with that of the older, central, portion of the manuscript, and of a calibre generally not known in recent manuscripts of the late twentieth century. The graphic layout of the text on the final page is also unusual. In East Coast Qur'ans, whether in the Terengganu or Patani style, the scribe usually plans for the text to fill a complete line. Applied to the *basmala* at the beginning of a *sūra*, this is often achieved by elongating the *bā'-sīn* ligature to the necessary length, and indeed this feature can be seen clearly in the penultimate pages of this Qur'an. However, on the final page of the Qur'an, containing just *Sūrat al-Falaq* and *Sūrat al-Nās*, the initial *basmala* is centred in the middle of the page, as are the final words. The overall conclusion is that these additions and enhancements to the manuscript were certainly done at a subsequent date to the writing of the main central body of the text, but it is not easy to judge whether the enhancements date from the early or late twentieth century.

B.1.3 Java

The main production centre for 'enhanced' Islamic manuscripts from South East Asia appears to be located in Java, where, for the past two decades, a veritable cottage industry has been churning out illuminated Qur'an manuscripts. The *modus operandi* is to use genuine, probably nineteenth-century, Qur'an manuscripts written on *dluwang* – Javanese

⁵¹ The initial page and f.1 is watermarked 'Guthrie & Co.', while the rest of the initial 'additional' section is watermarked with a moonface in a shield.

paper made from the beaten bark of the mulberry tree⁵² – in good condition but without any original decorative features. Such Qur'ans are very common in Java (cf. BL Add. 12343 for an early nineteenth-century example), and are probably still easily and cheaply available. These originally plain Qur'ans are then illuminated by adding decorated frames at conventional locations within the text, and occasionally also other, more unusual, illuminated elements. The modern colours used are strong, including maroon, dark green, gold and pink, and the pigments harsh and chemical, often bleeding through the thin *dluwang*. The ornamentation of the decorated frames is not unattractive, but large and indelicate compared to good nineteenth-century work. The bindings are also often re-worked in strange ways. When isolated illuminated elements are encountered, they are usually situated before the start or after the end of the Qur'anic text, and generally depart radically from the iconographic repertoire of the traditional manuscript artist. And yet the very audacity of these illuminations can serve to belie concerns, as there are many instances in Javanese art of incongruous marriages between, say, European and Javanese elements.

I first encountered this phenomenon at the 'Asian Decorative Arts' sale at Christie's South Kensington, 13 December 2001, which included three illuminated Qur'an manuscripts written on *dluwang*, numbered lots 17, 18 and 19 (Christie's 2001). I inspected all three Qur'ans prior to the sale, and found them very intriguing. Lot 19 had a double-page spread of two fully illuminated pages preceding the Qur'anic text. On the left-hand page, a floral frame enclosed a note about the *shahadah*, while the remaining space on the page was coloured black. The right hand page bore a representation of 'crowned arms' according to European heraldic principles (which I now recognize as the arms of the Sunanate of Surakarta): a light blue oval panel containing in gold a star, crescent moon, 'the sun in splendour' (the sun with multiple rays and a human face), and a globe pierced by a nail (a pictorial rendering of the regnal name of the Sunan, *Pakubuwana*, 'Nail of the World'), surmounted by a Javanese crown, surrounded by a floral and foliate wreath.⁵³ Although this artistic composition was very unusual in a Qur'anic context, I found it quite convincing



Fig. 15: Illuminated panel at the start of a Qur'an from Madura. BL, Or. 15877, fol.1r.

(at the time!) because I was familiar with the occasional appearance of such quasi-heraldic symbols in Javanese manuscripts, as, for example, in the stamped figure of a sun-faced 'angel', flanked by a man-in-the-moon and a star, in a Javanese calendrical treatise copied in Yogyakarta in c. 1810.⁵⁴ Lot 17 had very heavy and rather crude wooden binding boards, which I found a puzzling and unattractive feature, and moreover the dense double decorated frames around the start of the Qur'anic text extended to the very edges of the page. Lot 18 was in some ways the most conventional, with three pairs of decorated double frames at the beginning, middle and end of the Qur'anic text, and marginal ornaments marking every *juz'* or thirtieth part of the text. But less usual was the illuminated frontispiece in the form of a standing screen, bearing a medallion inscribed: *Pangeran Paku Ningrat Kraton Sumeneb 1793* (Fig. 15). As the illumination appeared to be certainly

⁵² On the production of *dluwang* or *daluang*, see Ekadjati and McGlynn 1996.

⁵³ Cf. de Vries 2010 <<http://www.hubert-herald.nl/IndoSolo.htm>>.

⁵⁴ Behrend 1996, 190, Fig. 208.

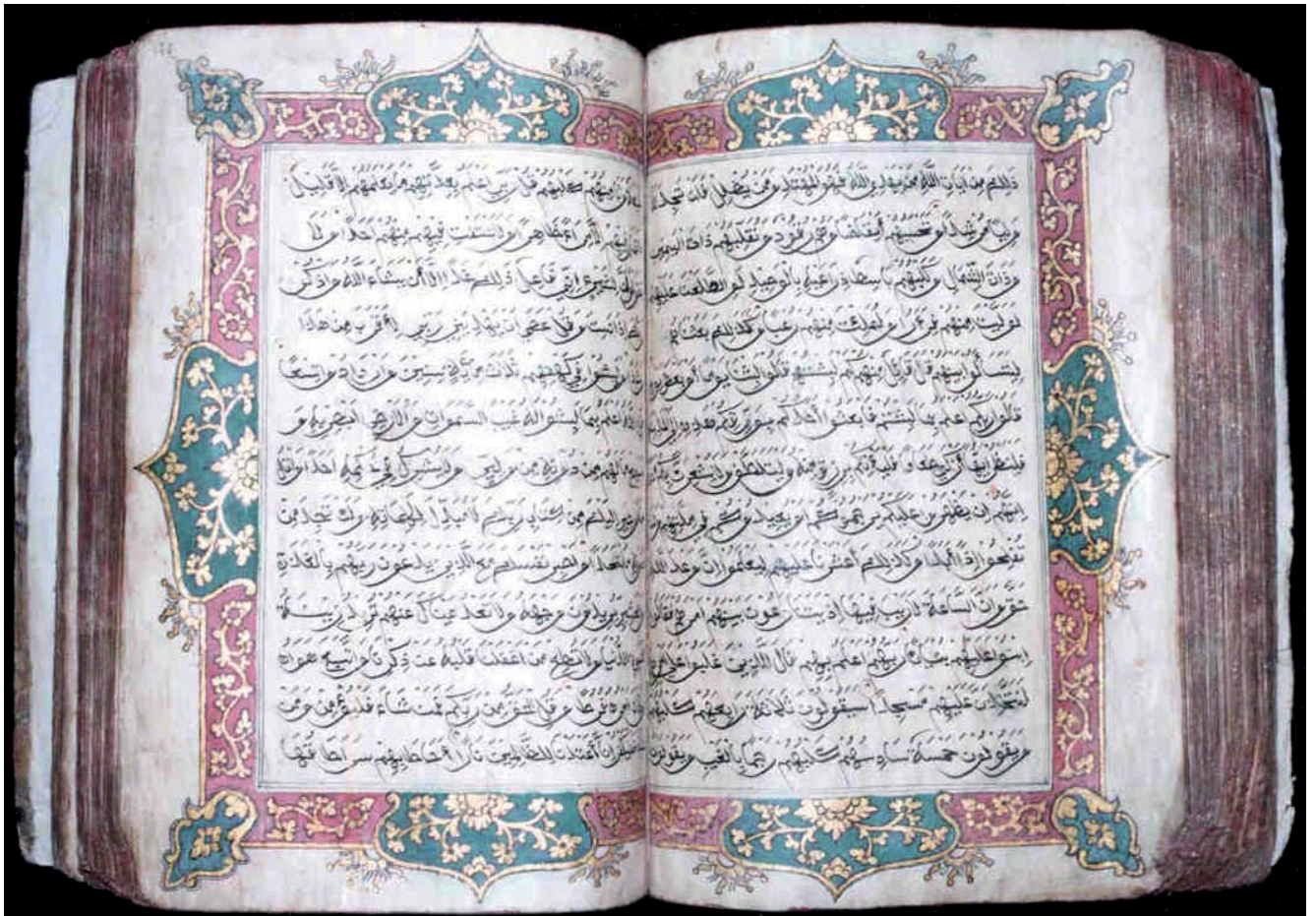


Fig. 16: Recently added illuminated double frames in the centre of a 19th-century Qur'an from Madura, enclosing text starting at *Sūrat al-Kahf*, 18:17. BL, Or. 15877, fols.147^v-148^r.

later than eighteenth-century, I took 1793 to be the Javanese year, equivalent to 1865 CE. A feature which convinced me (then!) of the manuscript's authenticity was the spelling of *Sumeneb* as *s.w.m.n.b*, with a *b* rather than *p*, as is indeed found in nineteenth-century Malay letters from the court of Sumenep.⁵⁵ The most impressive feature of the manuscript was the calligraphy: the whole text was written in a supremely confident, artistic, cursive sloping hand, and it was the quality of the calligraphy that convinced me to bid for the manuscript. At the sale, Lot 18 was acquired by the British Library, and is now held as Or. 15877; Lot 19 was sold; and Lot 17 was unsold.

In the intervening years I have worked intensively on the art of the Qur'an in South East Asia, and on the basis of my now much greater understanding of the field, it is clear that all three manuscripts offered at Christie's in 2001

were 'enhanced' manuscripts, namely plain nineteenth-century Qur'ans from Java written on *dhuwang* that were probably only illuminated shortly before being consigned for sale. For example, I can now state with confidence that there is no authentic tradition of placing bold stand-alone illuminated elements – such as the frontispiece from Sumenep – in South East Asian Qur'an manuscripts. In the manuscript acquired by the British Library, Or. 15877, further indications of the very recent illumination include bleed-through from the strong green pigment used, and the discernible texture of talcum powder rubbed over the illuminated elements, presumably to induce the required patina. The decorative medallions marking the start of each *juz'* overlie and in some cases partially obscure earlier, original, calligraphic indicators or annotations in the margins. Most decisively, the double decorative frames in the middle of the manuscript do not frame the beginning of *Sūrat al-Kahf*, as is customary in Javanese

⁵⁵ Cf. Gallop 2012d.



Fig. 17: Pictorial additions at the end of a Qur'an from Java. IAMM 1998.1.3626.

illuminated Qur'ans,⁵⁶ but the pages starting with verse 17 of the *sūra* (Fig. 16). What would have originally been a typical Javanese brown leather binding with stamped medallion, corner brackets and multiple concentric borders has been dyed black and the medallion and corner brackets have been gilded. Yet another non-traditional touch is that the fore-edges of the manuscript have been gilded. The (authentic) colophon to this manuscript has now been partially deciphered; it was copied by 'Abd al-Latif in the 'hamlet of Larangan, in the village of Puri' (*dusun Larangan kampung Puri*). Even though the frontispiece inscription mentioning Sumenep is not original, it may imply that the manuscript is from Madura, and there is indeed a village called Larangan in regency (*kabupaten*) of Pamekasan, near Sumenep. I am pleased to report that my assessment of the quality of the calligraphy in Or.

15877 has not changed, but the illumination may only be described as 'an interesting example of very late twentieth-century Javanese or Madurese work.'⁵⁷

Since 2001, countless other examples of these 'enhanced' Javanese Qur'ans have been documented, too many to be listed, mostly on *dluwang* but some also on European paper. Amongst the earliest documented are two Qur'ans from the JAKIM collection (and hence pre-dating 1998) now held in the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia, one with a quasi-architectural structure filling the page below the final lines of text, with a crown and a 'logo' (IAMM 1998.1.3626) (Fig. 17), and the other with a deep v-shaped device filled with a floral vine (IAMM 1998.1.3627). A sale at Christie's South Kensington on 15 April 2010 included three lots (692, 694, 697) containing 11 Javanese Qur'ans, of which eight can be categorised as 'enhanced' *dluwang* Qur'an manuscripts.

⁵⁶ Gallop 2012b, 217.

⁵⁷ Gallop 2012b, 217



Fig. 18: Wayang-style illustration added to a religious text in Arabic with interlinear translation in Javanese. Museum Religieuze Kunst & Etnografica, Antwerp, RKE.62.235.

A copy was seen at the Muzium Kraftangan in 2000, and the Library of the University of Cologne acquired a copy in 2012 (Cod. Malaialogie 001/2012).⁵⁸

B.1.4 Java: illustrative additions

Alongside the Qur'ans from Java with added illumination, a few examples have been noted of non-Qur'anic Islamic manuscripts from Java with added illustration. These are generally *dluwang* manuscripts containing religious texts in Arabic or Javanese commonly used in *pesantren* (madrasah) education, which have been 'enhanced' with colourful drawings of *wayang* characters in the style of Javanese shadow puppets. *Wayang*-style illustration is common in Javanese literary manuscripts in Javanese script, and similar doodles may often be found on the spare pages at the end of Malay literary manuscripts, but such illustrations are never traditionally found in manuscripts used for religious instruction.⁵⁹ A typical example of one of these newly enhanced manuscripts is now held in the Museum Religieuze Kunst & Etnografica, Antwerp, RKE.62.235 (Fig. 18).⁶⁰

B.2 Textual enhancements

Daghistani Qur'ans with added South East Asian colophons

The final group of 'enhanced' manuscripts to be discussed is fundamentally different in nature from all others presented above because in this category the 'base' manuscripts are not

from South East Asia but from Daghestan in the Caucasus, now part of the Russian Federation. They have been included in this article because the manuscripts bear colophons identifying their places of origin as in South East Asia, and have therefore been offered for sale on the international Islamic art market, and purchased, as 'South East Asian Qur'ans.'

This group of manuscripts was introduced and discussed in detail in my 2008 publication in the St Petersburg-based journal *Manuscripta Orientalia*, 'From Caucasasia to South



Fig. 19: Opening pages of a fine large illuminated Qur'an from Daghestan. BL, Or. 15913, fols 1^v-2^r.

⁵⁸ Wieringa 2014.

⁵⁹ Cf. Mulaika 2017.

⁶⁰ With thanks to Prof. E. Vonck for this information and the image.

East Asia: Daghistani Qur'ans and the Islamic manuscript tradition in Brunei and the southern Philippines'.⁶¹ In that study, I presented 14 Qur'an manuscripts with a shared and highly distinctive codicological profile,⁶² six of which had colophons mentioning South East Asian toponyms such as Kota Batu in Brunei, Sabah (Fig. 19), and the Philippines (Figs 20 and 21). Following a close examination, I concluded firmly that 'all 14 Qur'ans discussed above were created within the Daghistani manuscript tradition, by Daghistani scribes, and using Daghistani materials and implements'.⁶³ I then examined the historical record, concluding that there were just enough traces of linkages (for example, a nineteenth-century Daghistani scholar in Mecca is known to have taught

South East Asian Muslims) to imagine 'a historical, theological and cultural context within which the prospect of a Daghistani scribe producing a Qur'an in the Brunei-southern Philippines zone in the eighteenth or early nineteenth century is logically plausible, without, it must be admitted, a single piece of firm supporting evidence from South East Asia itself, other than the colophons of the six Qur'an manuscripts'.⁶⁴ At this point, I faced up to 'squarely consider the question of forgery,' in particular, whether the 'colophons may have been tampered with or added to at some subsequent date', but on the basis of a close visual examination, concluded that there was 'no reason to doubt the authenticity of the colophons of these Qur'an manuscripts and their South East Asian links'.⁶⁵

However, since that date I have come to the opposite conclusion, namely that the colophons linking these Daghistani manuscripts to South East Asia must have been



Fig. 20: The start of Juz' 'Amma, with the exuberant and dashing calligraphy characteristic of Daghistani Qur'ans. BL, Or. 16058, fols 527v-528r.

added recently – and expertly! – for a number of reasons which will be outlined below.

Firstly, one major hindrance at the time of writing of my 2008 article was the state of knowledge of the field, with the complete absence of any published reproductions of authentic Qur'an manuscripts from the Philippines, combined with confirmation from Brunei authorities of the absence in Brunei of any Qur'an manuscripts known to have



Fig. 21: Colophon mentioning the Philippines (*bi-Filibbin*) in a Daghistani Qur'an. BL, Or. 16058, fol. 548r.

⁶¹ Gallop 2008a, 2008b.

⁶² For an outline of the characteristics of Daghistani Qur'ans, with respect to binding, paper, layout, script, illumination and spatial arrangement of the Qur'anic text, see Gallop 2008a, 34–37.

⁶³ Gallop 2008a, 43.

⁶⁴ Gallop 2008a, 49.

⁶⁵ Gallop 2008a, 49.



Fig. 22: Frontispiece of a Daghistani manuscript containing a portion of the Qur'an. Viewed in London, 2010.



Fig. 23: Final page of the Daghistani manuscript containing part of the Qur'an shown in Fig. 22, with an inscription written against a polychrome floral ground mentioning Kota Batu, Brunei. Viewed in London, 2010.

been copied in Brunei itself.⁶⁶ I have since worked intensively on Islamic manuscripts from the Philippines, documenting Qur'an manuscripts acquired by American forces in the first decade of the twentieth century and now in U.S. collections, as well as Qur'ans still held in Mindanao itself.⁶⁷ All of these examples of illuminated Islamic manuscripts from the southern Philippines were found to relate broadly to other South East Asian schools of manuscript art, but betray no codicological linkages at all with the Daghistani Qur'ans.

Secondly, the flow of these Daghistani Qur'ans onto the market has continued unabated over the past few years, turning up not only in London sale rooms but also in the hands of dealers in the Middle East and elsewhere, offered for sale with a diverse range of supposed provenances. A Malaysian collector of manuscripts and antiquities currently based in Abu Dhabi, Abdul Raman Bahrom, has published

three examples in his blog *Abu Dervish*; two of these were sold to him in around 2011 by a dealer based in Lebanon, one described as 'Kashmiri' and the other – comprising some large loose leaves – as 'Mamluk', but he now agrees that both are Daghistani.⁶⁸ The Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka in Kuala Lumpur has recently acquired a copy, apparently from a dealer in Terengganu;⁶⁹ and indeed, while I was writing this article, I noticed a copy offered for sale on eBay.

The concatenation of events which for me tipped the tenuous balance of probability, from my earlier acceptance of these colophons as authentic to my present realization that they must be fake, was the appearance on the London market in 2010 of three manuscripts.

A sale at Bonhams on 15 April 2010 included a recognizably Daghistani Qur'an section, with unusual blue floral illuminated cartouches on the front cover, overwritten

⁶⁶ Gallop 2008a, 40.

⁶⁷ See Gallop 2011a, 2011b, 2012.

⁶⁸ Abdul Raman Bahrom 2011, 2012, 2015.

⁶⁹ Seen on display in May 2017.

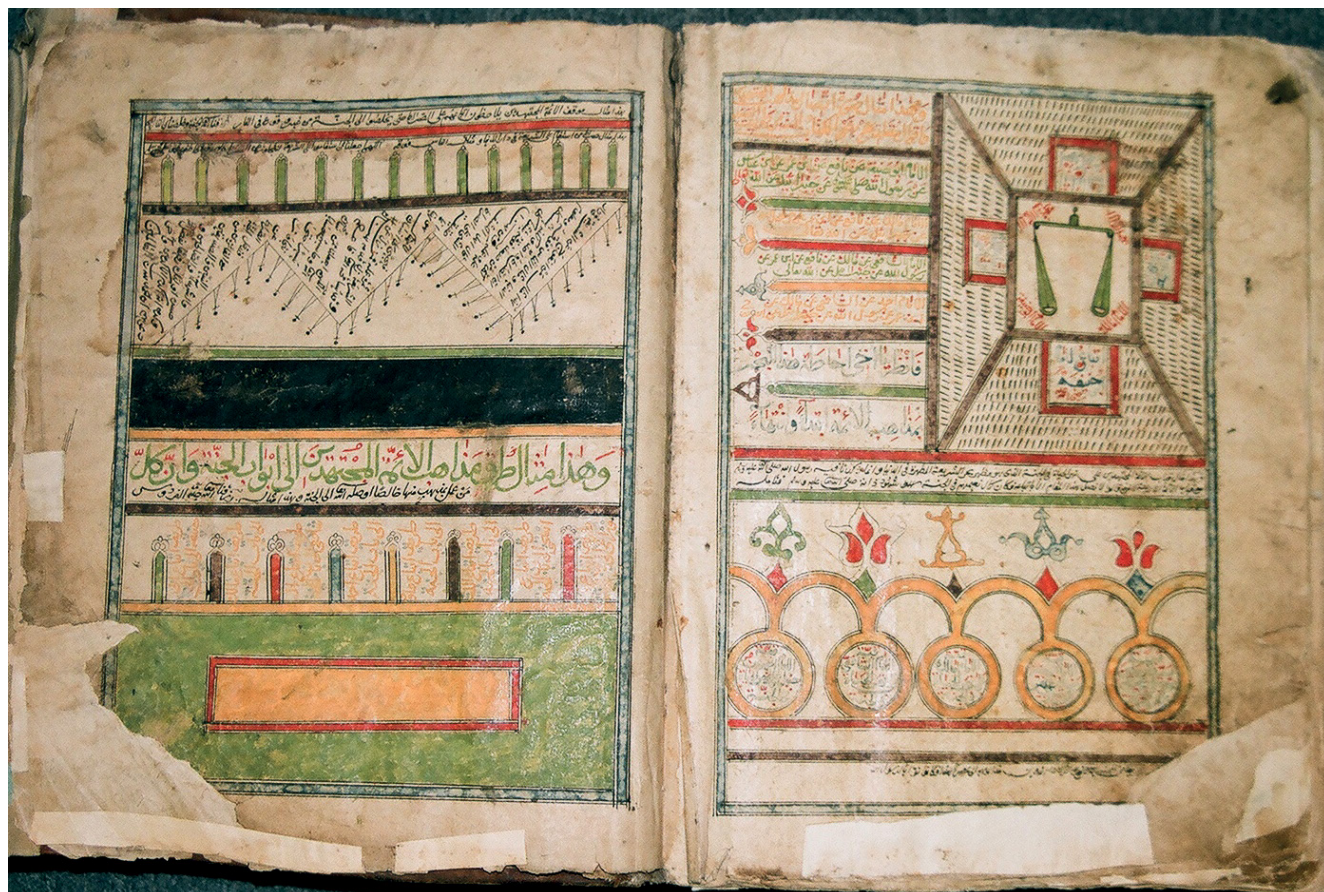


Fig. 24: Diagrams of the schools of law, at the end of a large illuminated Qur'an from Daghistan. BL, Or. 16127.

with the commonly-found Qur'anic injunction to ensure ritual purity when handling the Holy Book (56:77–79). The colophon to this manuscript was dated Sha'bān 1030 (June–July 1621 CE), and the scribe was named as Muḥammad bin 'Abd Allāh al-Shaghūrī. Around the same time a Qur'an section, containing only a selection of surahs, came into the hands of a London dealer. It bore an almost identical floral illuminated composition, in pink, on the front cover, with the same Qur'anic inscription (Fig. 22). But in this case, the manuscript bore a colophon dated 3 Rabī' al-Awwal 1124 (10 April 1712) with the scribe named as Munqāḥ ibn Maḥmūd al-Burūnawī of Kotū Bātū in Burūnāī (Fig. 23). The artistic linkages between the frontispieces of two manuscripts are indisputable,⁷⁰ suggesting a common stable of production, and yet the hand of the Qur'anic text is different. The dates in both colophons appear unfeasibly early for these types of manuscripts which mostly date from the late eighteenth and

nineteenth centuries. The inescapable conclusion is that both the colophons and the illuminated frontispieces were added to these two manuscripts relatively recently.

Finally, a large illuminated Qur'an manuscript was offered for sale at Sotheby's on 5 October 2015, lot 47, with a colophon naming the scribe as Hāshim bin Muḥammad al-Burūnawī in the kingdom of Kūtā Bātū and the date as Ramadan 1070 (May–June 1660), with a further inscription in red below dedicated to 'our lord the Sultan'.⁷¹ The manuscript was sold for a hammer price of £80,000, equivalent to £97,250 in-clusive of buyer's premium – the highest price achieved at auction for a 'South East Asian' manuscript – and is now held in the Museum of Islamic Art, Doha. In fact, the Qur'an displays all the standard features associated with Daghistani Qur'ans, and most characteristically, it includes at the back a diagram representing the four schools of law similar to that found in a Qur'an with a confirmed Daghistani

⁷⁰ The trefoil cartouche on each frontispiece is identical in shape to that found on a nineteenth-century arched stone fireplace, probably from Kubachi, Daghistan, now in the Aga Khan Museum; Graves and Junod 2012, 155.

⁷¹ For images of this manuscript see <<http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/lot.47.html/2010/a-princely-collection-treasures-from-the-islamic-world-110225>>.



Fig. 25: Full colour image of the colophon to the Daghistani Qur'an shown in Fig. 21, stating it had been copied by a scribe named Zayn al-Din in a town in Saḡaḡ in Brunei. BL, Or. 15913, fol. 277^v.

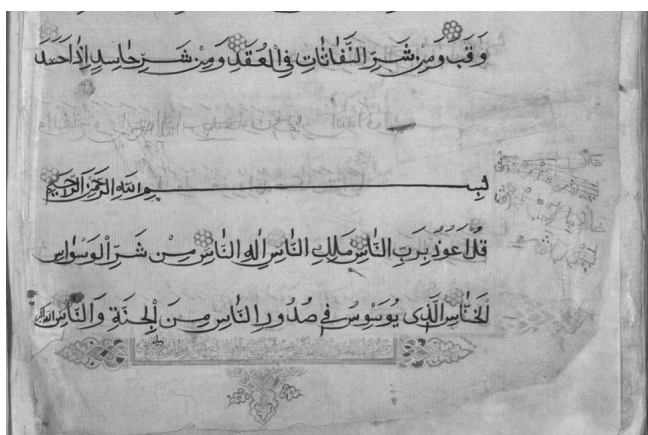


Fig. 26: Near infrared spectral image (1050 nm) of the same page, showing how the decoration around the colophon stands out, whereas the decoration in the right-hand margin has almost disappeared from view. The green in the colophon is dark against the background paper but the green in the right-hand margin appears the same as the background. BL, Or. 15913, fol. 277^v.

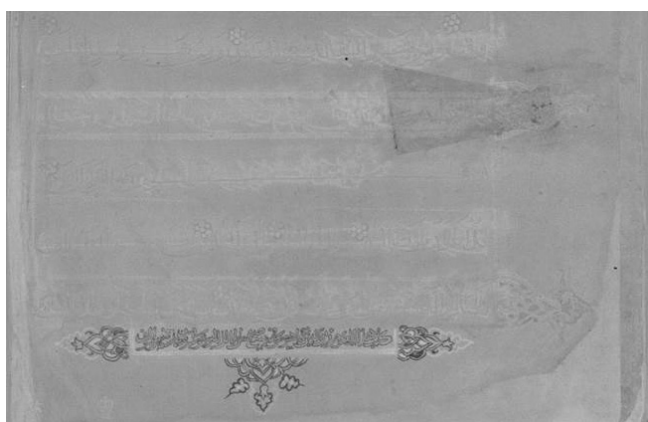


Fig. 27: Result of the application of independent component analysis (ICA) on the spectral images, showing very clearly the difference between the pigments in the colophon and the other decoration on the page. BL, Or. 15913, fol. 277^v.

provenance now held in the British Library (Fig. 24). Overall, however, the calibre of calligraphy and illumination in this Qur'an was not nearly as fine as that in many other similar (i.e. Daghistani) Qur'ans that had appeared on the market. Therefore, I could not help but conclude that the Brunei colophon in this manuscript was a recent addition to a Daghistani Qur'an.

Thus far, my conclusions were based purely on contextual evidence. Fortunately, with the kind assistance Prof. Haida Liang – Head of Imaging and Sensing for Archaeology, Art History and Conservation (ISAAC) at the School of Science and Technology, Nottingham Trent University – I was recently able to test my hypothesis scientifically. One of the Daghistani Qur'ans now in the British Library, Or. 15913, bears on the bottom of the final page a colophon statement (mentioning the toponyms Saḡaḡ and al-Burūnawī) set within an illuminated panel, with what appears to be exactly the same ornamentation and pigments as found elsewhere in the manuscript. On 14 February 2018, this page was subjected to multi-spectral imaging by my colleague in the British Library conservation department, imaging scientist Christina Duffy, and the spectral images were then analysed by Liang's student Luke Butler and research fellow Sotiria Kogou. While the pigments surrounding the colophon appear to be identical with those elsewhere on the page to the naked eye (Fig. 25), the near infrared (1050 nm) band image (Fig. 26) shows a clear difference. Both the application of principal component analysis (PCA) and the independent component analysis (ICA) (Fig. 27) on the spectral images, and the spectral comparison between the green areas in the colophon and those elsewhere on the page, show a clear difference in the material composition, and these results support the suggestion that the colophon panel was added to the manuscript at a later date. While spectral imaging cannot give a clear dating for this later addition, it does confirm that the colophon is not an integral part of the original manuscript.

Thus all the other South East Asian colophons in the Daghistani manuscripts which I published in 2008, and at the time gave the 'benefit of the doubt', can now also be regarded as spurious modern additions. Ironically, although the South East Asian colophons were evidently added for commercial reasons, the manuscripts themselves are in fact intrinsically valuable as fine examples of an impressive albeit little-known Islamic calligraphic tradition from the Caucasus, and are worthy of being appreciated as such in their own right. Thus the British Library is now happy to find itself the

proud possessor of an important research collection of ten Daghistani Qur'ans, even though some of the manuscripts were admittedly first acquired in the belief that they were from the Malay world. Nevertheless, the high degree of market activity has necessitated this lengthy exposé, to clarify forcefully that such Daghistani Qur'an manuscripts have no authentic connection with South East Asia.

C. A view from the ground in Madura

I wrote earlier in this article of my impression of a 'veritable cottage industry' in Java, 'churning out' illuminated Qur'ans, without having any concrete information on the actual circumstances of production. It is therefore extremely valuable to be able to share a view from the ground, offered by Hakiem Syukrie, from the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia, who in a blog post in 2012 wrote about meeting one such producer of new and enhanced Qur'ans.⁷²

Following an increasing flow of visitors to the Section for the Certification of Copies of the Qur'an (Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf al-Qur'an) of the Ministry of Religious Affairs at the Bayt al-Qur'an in Jakarta, all bearing photographs of oversize 'new old' Qur'an manuscripts, found in locations as diverse as Amuntai in South Kalimantan and Fak-Fak in Papua, and asking sky-high prices, Hakiem began to wonder who the scribes were, where they were based, and what their motives were for producing these manuscripts. On the basis of information from a colleague at the Museum Empu Tantular in Sidoarjo near Surabaya in East Java, in July 2011 Hakiem travelled to Sumenep at the eastern end of the island of Madura, where he saw in the Palace Museum (Museum Kraton) a giant Qur'an 4 × 3 m in size. According to museum officials, the Qur'an had been produced a few years previously in conjunction with a provincial Qur'an recital competition (MTQ, Musabaqah Tilawatil Quran), by a woman in the nearby district of Bluto.

Expressing a desire to meet the makers of these manuscripts, and perhaps to acquire one, Hakiem was taken to meet an antique *kolektor* (the Indonesian term *kolektor* carries the commercial connotations of a 'dealer' as well as a 'collector') named Haji Ihsan in Bluto. On learning of Hakiem's interests, Haji Ihsan brought out a number of manuscripts, distinguishing clearly between which were new and which were old, and saying of one in particular, 'This

is old, but the beginning with Fatihah and al-Baqarah and the cover are new, to replace the lost originals'. In a corner of the room, Hakiem noticed a pile of completed very large Qur'ans, waiting to be bound. Haji Ihsan then called out his son, Usmaniyah, who together with five other scribes was responsible for writing the Qur'ans, and who showed Hakiem the felt-tip pens (*spidol*) which they used for writing. They also explained that Qur'ans on *lontar* were written with a small *bor* (drill, or spike); Hakiem also noticed many siwalan trees (*Borassus flabellifer*) – the source of *lontar* palm leaves – growing around the house.

Hakiem then raised the fact of the high prices being asked in Jakarta for such Qur'ans, and Haji Ihsan replied, 'These [i.e. large] Qur'ans I sell for 3 million [rupiah]. The Lontar ones I sell for 5 million.⁷³ If someone takes them to Malaysia they can go for 15 million. If someone claims that these are old Qur'ans and asks billions for them, they are cheats.' Haji Ihsan said his customers came from everywhere, not just from Indonesia, and that in the 1980s and 1990s he would fill up a pick-up [truck] with Madura manuscripts every week and take them to Jakarta, to be sold overseas, including to Yemen and Jordan. At the end of the meeting, he gave his mobile number to Hakiem, to be passed on to prospective customers: 'If you know of anyone who wants to buy a hand-written Qur'an, tell them to contact me – they make lovely decorations for any home.'

Hakiem wrote that he published his blog post in order to clarify the different roles of producers and scribes of these Qur'ans, and the vendors, and the status of the Qur'ans themselves, to ensure that not all are 'tarred with the same brush.'

D. Is What You See What You Get?

The Islamic manuscripts discussed in this article can be categorised either as newly-created works, or authentic old manuscripts which have been enhanced either graphically or textually, and three major centres of production of these 'problematic' manuscripts can be identified.

In the 1980s and early 1990s Patani appears to have been a centre for the creation of new manuscripts in Malay on a wide range of subjects, including both new copies of older works produced within the traditional idiom, and new 'fanciful' manuscripts which attracted attention primarily

⁷² All the information in this section is based on Syukrie 2012, with my own translations of quotes.

⁷³ With an exchange rate in 2011 of about £1 = Rp. 20,000, Rp 3 million is roughly £150 (then US\$/Euros 200) and Rp 5 million about £250 (US\$/Euros 350).



Fig. 28: Illuminated double pages of the final two *sūrah*s from a Javanese Qur'an, inserted into the middle of a religious text in Arabic from Java. Farish Noor Collection, National Library of Singapore.

because of their non-traditional format and decoration. These Patani manuscripts are notable for their fine small rounded hand, which though distinguishable as 'modern' in appearance by comparison with nineteenth-century manuscripts, is nonetheless very accomplished. In fact, it could be suggested that by the late twentieth century, Patani was the only region in the Malay world still capable of producing a fine manuscript hand for writing Malay in Jawi script, and it was this skill which enabled writers in Patani to 'rise to the challenge' of the economic boom years of the last decades of the twentieth century in South East Asia, when Malaysian institutions were avidly seeking to build up their collections of Malay manuscripts.

The second major centre of activity in South East Asia is Java, perhaps with a particular focus on the island of Madura in the province of East Java. From the 1990s to the present day, large numbers of enhanced and new manuscripts have been produced in Java, for both the domestic and the international market. Enhanced manuscripts are primarily Qur'ans, comprising originally plain nineteenth-century manuscripts mostly written on *dhuwang* to which illumination has been added. A few non-Qur'anic religious manuscripts are also known with added *wayang*-style illustration. New manuscripts produced in Java are generally Qur'ans created as *unik* artefacts (the Indonesian word *unik* carries connotations of 'unusual' or 'fanciful' rather than the singularity of the English term *unique*) because of their large size or *lontar* format. However, unlike in Patani, the calibre of calligraphy in these manuscripts is generally mediocre, or



Fig. 29: Preceding pages of those shown in Fig. 17, showing on the left a page from a Qur'an (containing *Sūrat al-Ṣad*, verses 1–16), which has been inserted into a religious text in Arabic from Java. Farish Noor Collection, National Library of Singapore.

as Ali Akbar (2014) has termed it, *asal-asalan*, only reaching a bare minimum standard.

In discussing these two regional groups of manuscripts, in general I have deliberately avoided the use of the word 'fake', preferring the term 'problematic' to acknowledge the inevitable discrepancy between viewer expectations and the actual nature of the manuscripts. But if a 'fake' manuscript can be described as one that purports to be something which it is not, I would argue that in many of the cases discussed above there is not necessarily such intrinsic 'purport' involved. Taking for example the various copies of the *Sejarah Patani*, who is to suggest that they ever claimed to be older than they are? The text contains numerous references to twentieth-century events, and in all cases the illumination is highly original and unrelated to decorative elements found in nineteenth-century and earlier manuscripts. Therefore,

pending textual study, these manuscripts should be accepted as no more and no less than twentieth-century manuscripts of a Malay political-historical work. Turning to 'enhanced' Qur'ans, there is a long and illustrious tradition of the embellishing of Qur'an manuscripts as a mark of honour for the text of the Divine Revelation, and although it is true that in the case of the stridently-coloured Javanese *dluwang* Qur'ans, the motivation was probably for financial rather than spiritual gain, it is difficult to be categorical. As for the newly-created Javanese Qur'ans, Hakiem Syukrie offers a robust defence of Haji Ihsan's booming business in 'Souvenir Qur'ans' (*al-Quran Cinderamata*), which are openly sold as newly-made objects of beauty or interest suitable for enhancing the interior of any Muslim home. As

Wieringa⁷⁴ has put it bluntly, it takes two to tango, and as long as the demand exists for such new or hybrid manuscripts, the market will supply them. Indeed, the phrase (most often used with computer fonts) 'What You See Is What You Get' is in fact extremely appropriate in the present situation, and suggests that onus for evaluating these manuscripts should be shared with the beholder.

However I would argue that the final group of enhanced manuscripts – Daghistani Qur'ans with added colophons relating to Brunei and the southern Philippines – are in a different category. Here I would not recoil from using the word 'fake' in relation to these added textual elements, and would also wish to highlight the great potential damage that can be caused to scholarship, and the distortion of our understanding of the cultural history of the region, by such embellishments seeking to maximise the commercial value of the manuscripts.

At this juncture I would like to stress that, in view of the limited current state of the knowledge of the field, and unless specified otherwise, there is no implication that any vendors of manuscripts mentioned in this article were aware of the 'problematic' nature of the manuscripts at the moment of sale. However, the time now is certainly ripe for all interested parties – including collectors, dealers, auction houses, scholars, curators, cataloguers and Qur'an certifiers – to take the initiative to describe and report as accurately and honestly as possible the manuscripts which come into their hands. A few laudable attempts can already be noted: for example, the published catalogue description of the probably originally monochrome decorated manuscript from Aceh mentioned above, PNM MSS 2654, reads 'The dome-shaped decoration on fol. 1^v and fol. 117^r appears newly coloured'.⁷⁵ While Edwin Wieringa admitted spending '€ 450 of German tax-payer money' on a Qur'an manuscript which he later realised 'must have been specifically created for the market',⁷⁶ his close description and analysis of the manuscript, and his highlighting of particular 'problems' such as the missing Qur'anic text at the junctures between the newly added illuminated elements and the 'core' old manuscript, will greatly help others to evaluate similar manuscripts. Abdul Raman Bahrom's candid blog *Abu*

Dervish, written from the perspective of a private collector and giving full details of where he acquired manuscripts, and how they were described by the vendors, casts valuable light on the mechanics of the manuscript trade. Ali Akbar's important series of articles entitled *Qur'an kuno-kunoan*, 'Pseudo-ancient Qur'ans', in his blog *Khazanah Mushaf al-Qur'an Nusantara*, 'The treasury of Qur'ans from South East Asia', as well as another series, *Jangan langsung percaya!*, 'Don't be too quick to believe!', should also be noted, along with Hakiem Syukrie's blog highlighted above.

The present article is an attempt to build on the resources available for consultation by those studying such manuscripts, and hopefully also for those involved in acquiring or selling them. The aim is to advance knowledge in the field to an extent that an appreciation of new and enhanced manuscripts from South East Asia will be on the basis of a realistic acknowledgement of how and when they were actually created, and the relative merits of their constituent parts.

The final example presented here is from the collection of Islamic manuscripts formed by Dr Farish Noor, donated in 2017 to the National Library of Singapore. Acquired in Java in around 2013, it is a religious text in Arabic written on *dluwang*, and like most examples of the genre, the manuscript would originally have been completely plain and unadorned. However, this particular book now includes in the middle two illuminated pages from the end of a Javanese Qur'an, containing the *Sūrat al-Falaq* and *Sūrat al-Nās* (Fig. 28). As can be seen from the illustration, the edges of the pages are frayed and worn, and so these two folios have been 'backed' by being glued onto two other (non-consecutive) folios from the Qur'an, with the result that the reverse of the illuminated page with *Sūrat al-Falaq* contains the beginning of *Sūrat al-Ṣad*, verses 1–16 (Fig. 29), while the verso of the page with *Sūrat al-Nās* contains *Sūrat al-Ṣad* verses 42–60. Without any further information, this could be regarded as a truly audacious and misleading example of commercially-driven 'graphic enhancement'. But in this particular context, no deceit was intended, for according to Farish, the vendor cheerfully informed him that the manuscript had been 'improved' by the addition of the decorated pages taken from elsewhere. And so this book can simply be treated as a composite item, in future years to be seen as a testament to market conditions in the early twenty-first century, and which can be appreciated both for its original theological text,

⁷⁴ Wieringa 2014, 9.

⁷⁵ National Library of Malaysia 2002b, 43.

⁷⁶ Wieringa 2014, 2–3.

and also for the newly-added typically Javanese double illuminated frames from a now-dismembered Qur'an which – thanks to the entrepreneurial verve of the dealer – have been preserved within the volume. After all, in Hakiem Syukrie's words, 'Old or new, in time all these too will be old.'⁷⁷

ABBREVIATIONS

BL	British Library
CUL	Cambridge University Library
DBP	Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kuala Lumpur
IAMM	Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur
JA KIM	Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia
LUB	Leiden University Library
MS	manuscript
MSS	manuscripts
PNM	Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur

MANUSCRIPTS HELD IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

BL Or. 15877, Qur'an, Madura
 BL Or. 15913, Qur'an, Daghistan
 BL Or. 16058, Qur'an, Daghistan
 BL Or. 16128, *Hikayat Raja Khandak dan Raja Badar*, Reman, Patani
 BL Or. 16129, work by Imām Aḥmad
 BL Or. 16771, Qur'an (*Sūrat al-Kahf* to end), Daghistan

DBP MS 20, *Sejarah Patani*
 DBP MS 181, *Sejarah Patani*

IAMM 1998.1.3537, Qur'an
 IAMM 1998.1.3626, Qur'an, Java
 IAMM 1998.1.3627, Qur'an, Java

LUB Cod. Or. 26.541, *Sejarah Patani*

Museum Religieuze Kunst & Etnografica, Antwerp, RKE.62.235, text in Arabic and Javanese

National Library of Singapore, Farish Noor Collection, B29235335J

PNM MSS 809, *Sejarah Patani*
 PNM MSS 931, *Kitab mawlid*
 PNM MSS 1319, *Cerita Nabi Muhammad*
 PNM MSS 1322, verses from the Qur'an
 PNM MSS 1323, *Kitab tibb*
 PNM MSS 1470, *Kitab tibb*
 PNM MSS 2412, *Iḍāḥ al-bāb li murīd al-nikāḥ bil-ṣawāb*
 PNM MSS 2632, *Sejarah Patani*
 PNM MSS 2654, *Hidāyat al-ḥabīb fī al-targhīb wal-tarhīb*
 PNM MSS 3236, Qur'an

University of Cologne, Cod. Malaiologie 001/2012

⁷⁷ 'Kuno atau baru, pada waktunya nanti akan menjadi kuno juga', Syukrie 2012.

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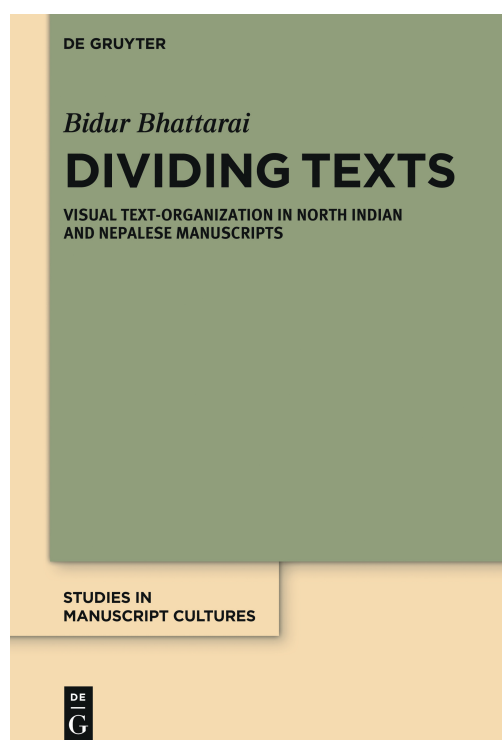
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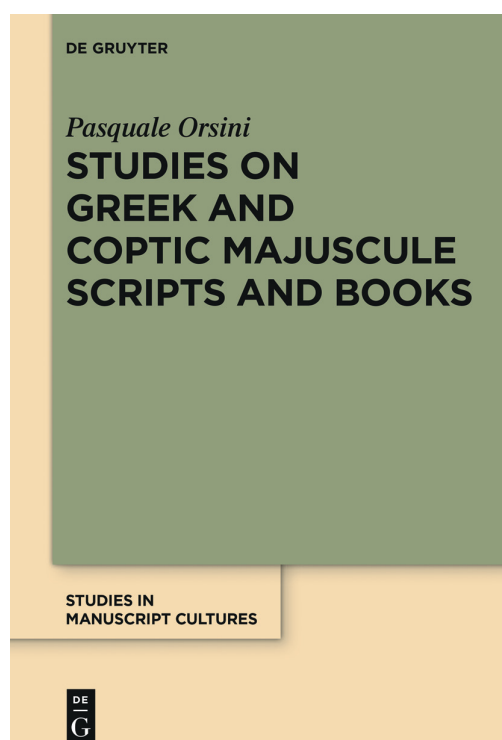
Forthcoming



10 - Dividing Texts: Visual Text-Organization in North Indian and Nepalese Manuscripts by Bidur Bhattarai

The number of manuscripts produced in the Indian sub-continent is astounding and is the result of a massive enterprise that was carried out over a vast geographical area and over a vast stretch of time. Focusing on areas of Northern India and Nepal between 800 to 1300 ^{ce} and on manuscripts containing Sanskrit texts, the present study investigates a fundamental and so far rarely studied aspect of manuscript production: visual organization. Scribes adopted a variety of visual strategies to distinguish one text from another and to differentiate the various sections within a single text (chapters, sub-chapters, etc.). Their repertoire includes the use of space(s) on the folio, the adoption of different writing styles, the inclusion of symbols of various kind, the application of colors (rubrication), or a combination of all these. This study includes a description of these various strategies and an analysis of their different implementations across the selected geographical areas. It sheds light on how manuscripts were produced, as well as on some aspects of their employment in ritual contexts, in different areas of India and Nepal.

Forthcoming



15 - Studies on Greek and Coptic Majuscule Scripts and Books by Pasquale Orsini

The volume contains a critical review of data, results and open problems concerning the principal Greek and Coptic majuscule bookhands, based on previous research of the author, revised and updated to offer an overview of the different graphic phenomena. Although the various chapters address the history of different types of scripts (i.e. biblical majuscule, sloping poitend majuscule, liturgical majuscule, epigraphic and monumental scripts), their juxtaposition allows us to identify common issues of the comparative method of palaeography. From an overall critical assessment of these aspects the impossibility of applying a unique historical paradigm to interpret the formal expressions and the history of the different bookhands comes up, due to the fact that each script follows different paths. Particular attention is also devoted to the use of Greek majuscules in the writing of ancient Christian books. A modern and critical awareness of palaeographic method may help to place the individual witnesses in the context of the main graphic trends, in the social and cultural environments in which they developed, and in a more accurate chronological framework.

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