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The focus of this journal is to provide readers on understanding of Indonesia and International affairs related to religious literature and heritage and its present developments through publication of articles, research reports, and books reviews.

Heritage of Nusantara specializes in religious studies in the field of literature either contemporarily or classically and heritage located in Southeast Asia. This journal warmly welcomes contributions from scholars of related disciplines.

Center for Research and Development of Religious Literature and Heritage

Address: Gedung Kementerian Agama RI Lt. 18, Jl. M.H. Thamrin No.6 Jakarta-Indonesia, Phone/Fax. 6221-3920713, 6221-3920718

E-mail : [heritage@kemenag.go.id](mailto:heritage@kemenag.go.id)

URL : [jurnallektur.kemenag.go.id/index.php/heritage](http://jurnallektur.kemenag.go.id/index.php/heritage)

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## **THE APPRECIATION AND STUDY OF QUR'AN MANUSCRIPTS FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE**

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**Annabel Teh Gallop**  
The British Library  
[annabel.gallop@bl.uk](mailto:annabel.gallop@bl.uk)

### **Abstract**

*The focus of this paper is not on theological aspects of the Qur'an, or on the study of the Qur'anic sciences in Southeast Asia over the past centuries, but rather to attempt to trace the path of the appreciation of old copies of the Qur'an in Southeast Asia as part of the historical record of the Islamic heritage of the region. In this light, Qur'an manuscripts are viewed as objects of material culture which can cast light on the societies which produced them, and as works of art which testify to the heights of artistic creativity in the region, for illuminated Qur'an manuscripts represent the pinnacle of achievements in the arts of the book in Southeast Asia. This historical record can be measured through a survey of how, where, when and by whom Qur'an manuscripts in Southeast Asia were collected, documented, studied and published, both in Southeast Asia itself and in the west.*

**Keywords:** *Qur'an, manuscripts, illumination, Southeast Asia, art*

### Abstrak

*Fokus artikel ini bukan pada sejarah penelitian ilmu al-Qur'an di Nusantara selama beberapa abad yang lalu, tetapi merupakan usaha mengkaji dan mendokumentasikan penelitian dan penghargaan mushaf kuno al-Qur'an Nusantara sebagai bagian warisan kebudayaan Islam wilayah ini. Naskah mushaf al-Qur'an dapat dianggap sebagai artefak kebudayaan yang mencerminkan masyarakat yang menciptakannya. Mushaf al-Qur'an juga dapat dihargai sebagai karya seni, karena naskah mushaf al-Qur'an berhias mencapai puncak hasil kesenian dibanding semua naskah Nusantara yang lain. Kajian ini berdasarkan survei bagaimana, kapan, di mana dan oleh siapa naskah mushaf al-Qur'an Nusantara dikoleksikan, dicatat, dikaji dan diterbitkan, baik di Nusantara sendiri maupun di wilayah lain.*

**Kata Kunci:** *Mushaf al-Qur'an, naskah, iluminasi, Nusantara, kesenian*

### Introduction

There is little doubt that Qur'an manuscripts have been present in Southeast Asia since the earliest days of the establishment of Islam as the religion of state with the conversion of rulers, a process that appears to have commenced in north Sumatra in the 13th century. Copies of the Qur'an were disseminated in the form of manuscripts, copied and recopied by scribes, and, from the 19th century onwards, through printing, initially using the technology of lithography in Palembang in 1848 and then later by typesetting or photolithography.

The focus of this paper is not on theological aspects of the Qur'an, of the study of the Qur'anic sciences in Southeast Asia over the past centuries, but rather to attempt to trace the path of the appreciation of old copies of the Qur'an in Southeast Asia as part of the historical record of the Islamic heritage of the region. In this light, Qur'an manuscripts are viewed as objects of material culture which can cast light on the societies which produced them, and as works of art which testify to the heights of artistic creativity in the region, for illuminated Qur'an manuscripts represent the pinnacle of achievements in the arts of the book in Southeast Asia. This historical record can be measured through a survey of how, where, when and by whom Qur'an manuscripts in Southeast Asia were collected, documented, studied and published, both in Southeast Asia itself and in the west.

## **Southeast Asian Qur'an Manuscripts: Collections, Documentation, Research and Publications**

Today, Southeast Asian Qur'an manuscripts are often accorded an important role in any discussion of Islamic art and culture in the region, as the supreme embodiment of religious art. However, this was not always the case, and in fact with only a few exceptions, the collecting, documentation, reproduction and publication of Qur'an manuscripts in Southeast Asia is barely more than three decades old. The following survey, presented by geographic region, is an attempt to trace, through the published record, the course of interest, both academic and general, in Qur'an manuscripts from island Southeast Asia or Nusantara.

Qur'an manuscripts are held today in institutions such as museums and libraries, and in private collections. One useful consideration is the degree of 'agency' or deliberate action involved in the formation of the collections. Thus some Qur'an manuscripts may have been actively sought out and acquired, for example by national and academic libraries and museums or by private collectors, while in other cases manuscripts may have been collected 'passively' through being retained over a period of time, for example in mosques, surau or madrasahs, or in family collections. This latter category may include both manuscripts which have been guarded carefully over the years through a clear appreciation of their value, or on the other hand they may have survived simply through inertia or even neglect, for example through being left undisturbed in a box or storeroom. There is of course overlap between the various categories, and some traditional institutions such as mosques and palaces may nowadays have museums to showcase and help preserve the most important manuscripts and books in their collections.

Documentation of Qur'an manuscripts can range from a chance reference in a report or publication concerning the presence of such an artefact, to listings of manuscripts held in an institution. Listings too can range in complexity from simple hand lists to full scholarly catalogues with bibliographical details such as the number of pages, sizes of folios, the extent of the text, etc. Documentation enables interested scholars to identify collections which hold Qur'an



manuscripts, and to ascertain the extent and potential interest of these collections.

But for the study from the perspective of art history, the appreciation of a Qur'an manuscript as a material object of value in its own right can only partially be advanced by hand lists and catalogues. Essential for this field of study is the availability of visual reproductions of Qur'an manuscripts, whether of full pages or details. The extent of such publications of images can also be seen as a very useful baseline indicator of the degree of scholarly and public interest in Qur'an manuscripts as cultural artefacts.

Relevant publications focus on Qur'an manuscripts themselves as objects of study, from a variety of perspectives, encompassing art history, philology, codicology, palaeography, or from a historical viewpoint for a range of disciplines, such as religious and political development, theology and pedagogy. These publications can take the form of books and scholarly articles, as well as newspapers reports and, increasingly today, as online postings on blogs and social media networks such as Facebook.

## **Indonesia**

The oldest institutional collection of Qur'an manuscripts in Southeast Asia is probably that in the present-day National Library of the Republic of Indonesia in Jakarta, heir to the collections of the National Museum and its predecessor, the library of the Bataviaasch Genootschap, established in 1778 as the oldest scholarly society in Asia. Nine Qur'an manuscripts were listed in the catalogue in Latin by Friederich & van den Berg (1873: 63-65); at present the PNRI holds 65 complete Qur'ans, as well as 15 other manuscripts containing parts of the Qur'an (Akbar, 2005: 49); all are listed in Behrend (1998).

However there was barely a reference to Qur'an manuscripts in Indonesian collections for the following century, although from the early 20th century onwards it is likely that Qur'an manuscripts were present in some regional museums throughout the archipelago, such as the Museum Aceh, founded in 1915. The collection formed by Haji Masagung by the early 1980s – now apparently dispersed – may be one of the earliest substantial private collections formed in Indonesia.

It was also in the 1980s that the first stirrings of research and interest can be discerned in Indonesia, when a few reproductions (in black-and-white) of illuminated Qur'an manuscripts begin to appear in a range of Indonesian publications. One of the pioneers in this development was probably the artist A.D. Pirous, who, through his interest in Islamic calligraphy, began to incorporate elements from Islamic manuscripts from Aceh in his artworks. Several photographs of manuscripts, including Qur'an manuscripts, were included in the exhibition 'Pameran Lukisan, Kaligrafi & Mesjid di Aceh' held at Museum Negeri Banda Aceh in June 1981, accompanied by a small booklet (Pameran, 1981).

Probably the single most important initiative which awakened interest in the exceptionally rich cultural treasury of Qur'an manuscripts was the first Festival Istiqlal held in Jakarta 1991. One of the core elements of the Festival was an exhibition of Qur'an manuscripts, which can be regarded as the first ever exhibition of Qur'an manuscripts from Southeast Asia, and the accompanying catalogue, probably constitutes the very first colour reproductions of finely illuminated Southeast Asian Qur'an manuscripts. However this publication is not widely available outside Indonesia, and perhaps the first international exposure to colour reproductions of illuminated Qur'an manuscripts from Indonesia was in the article about the Festival Istiqlal by Machmud Buchari in the journal *Arts of the Islamic World* (Buchari, 1992). At the same Festival, President Suharto presided at the launching of the copying of the Mushaf Istiqlal, a modern-day hand-written Qur'an, with each of its thirty parts (*juz'*) decorated with motifs inspired by traditional patterns from the (then) 27 provinces of Indonesia.<sup>1</sup> The Mushaf Istiqlal aroused enormous public interest, and probably played a major part in raising public consciousness of the cultural value of Qur'an manuscripts.

A number of other publications followed the Festival Istiqlal catalogue, of which the most important was *Illuminations: writing traditions of Indonesia* (Kumar & McGlynn, 1996). Not only was this the most ambitious survey to date of Indonesian manuscripts, it was also the most beautiful book on Indonesian manuscripts ever published, with superb colour photographs of the finest manuscripts in Indonesian collections, most of which had never been photographed before. Yet arguably one of its most profound and lasting

achievements was to place – in pride of place near the start of the volume, preceding the chapters on regional manuscript traditions – an essay on Arabic manuscripts from Indonesia (Johns 1996), including several illuminated Qur'an manuscripts. Other significant colour publications which followed include the ten-volume encyclopaedic *Indonesia Indah*, which included a few fine Qur'an manuscripts in the ninth volume, *Aksara* (Aksara, 1997).

In the new millenium, the most important driver of research and publication on Qur'an manuscripts in Indonesia has been the work of the Puslitbang Lektur Keagamaan of the Kementerian Agama, which has worked to survey Qur'an manuscripts held throughout Indonesia, revealing previously unknown riches. Important publications include the two-volume monographs *Mushaf Kuno di Indonesia* (Bafadal & Anwar, 2005), and the two journals of the Kementerian Agama which regularly publish articles on Qur'an manuscripts, initially *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* founded in 2003, and subsequently also *Suhuf*, which first appeared in 2007. Another important initiative is the British Library's Endangered Archives Programme.<sup>2</sup> Since its inception in 2005, 13 projects in Indonesia have received funding for the digitisation of manuscript collections, mostly in private hands and previously undocumented. All these collections are now fully accessible online through the British Library website, and many of these include a few Qur'an manuscripts.

In the present decade the internet and social media networks have become among the most important channels for the presentation of new discoveries and research on Qur'an manuscripts in Indonesia. I should highlight the work of Ali Akbar, whose blog *Khazanah Mushaf al-Qur'an Nusantara*<sup>3</sup> carries regular postings on all aspects of historic Qur'ans from Southeast Asia, both manuscript and printed. Another relevant blog is that of Hermansyah, which focusses on manuscripts from Aceh.<sup>4</sup> Facebook groups are also valuable sources for new discoveries, such as that of MAPESA, 'Masyarakat Pencinta Sejarah Aceh'.<sup>5</sup> Even just a fleeting online presence through occasional postings on Facebook by individuals, and E-bay postings by dealers and sellers, can help to document – at the very least – the existence of Qur'an manuscripts.

## Malaysia

In early 1980s, the Bahagian Hal Ehwal Islam (BAHEIS)<sup>6</sup> in the Prime Minister's Department of Malaysia had begun a big project to collect Islamic cultural artefacts including manuscripts. Over 3,600 manuscripts in Arabic, Malay and other languages were collected, mainly from Southeast Asia, with a particular focus on the north-eastern states of the Malay Peninsula, namely Terengganu, Kelantan and the culturally Malay-Muslim region of Patani in southern Thailand. An influential role in this project, including in the description of these manuscripts, was played by the late Wan Mohd. Shaghir bin Haji Wan Abdullah, a religious scholar from Patani, which may account for the preponderance in the collection of manuscripts from Patani. In 1984 the Malay Manuscripts Centre (Pusat Manuskrip Melayu) was founded at the National Library of Malaysia, and in 1985 took over the official remit from BAHEIS for the collection of manuscripts; in the past thirty years the PMM collection has grown to over 4,700 manuscripts from the Malay world, including about 40 Qur'an manuscripts.<sup>7</sup>

In Malaysia today the most important collection of Qur'an manuscripts is currently held in the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia (IAMM) in Kuala Lumpur. This comprises the loan collection of about 300 Qur'ans built up in the 1980s and early 1990s by BAHEIS, now known as JAKIM,<sup>8</sup> as well as a further 10 or so Qur'ans acquired by the IAMM since its founding in 1997. Other institutions which hold Qur'ans from the Malay world in Malaysia are state museums and libraries,<sup>9</sup> but there are no published catalogues of these Qur'an manuscripts.

Probably the first Malaysian scholar to acknowledge the exceptional artistic significance of illuminated Qur'an manuscripts was the Malay artist and intellectual Syed Ahmad Jamal. While illuminated manuscripts did not feature in *Rupa dan Jiwa* (Form and Soul), his 1979 exhibition and catalogue of Malay arts, in the second glossy edition of the book published in 1992 he reproduced images of a superb royal Qur'an from Terengganu, exceptionally rich in illumination and calligraphy. Since that time there have been a number of other studies and publications of Malay Qur'an manuscripts, most significantly the study by Dzul Haimi (2007) and by the Islamic Arts

Museum Malaysia (Barkeshli, 1999; IAMM, 2006), which always has a fine selection of illuminated Southeast Asian Qur'ans on permanent display in its galleries in Kuala Lumpur.

### **Other Parts of Southeast Asia**

About 10 Qur'an manuscripts from Southeast Asia are held in Singapore in the Asian Civilisations Museum and Malay Heritage Centre, while a few Qur'an manuscripts from Mindanao have been documented in the Philippines (Gallop, 2012). A similar number of Southeast Asian Qur'ans are known to be held in Brunei institutions, including the Brunei Museum and the royal gallery at the Pusat Dakwah, but these Qur'ans originate from Indonesia and do not include any manuscripts written in Brunei itself. No published information is available on Qur'an manuscripts held in Thailand, Cambodia or Myanmar, although it is highly likely that these may exist in private collections.

### **The West**

In view of the long and profound tradition of scholarship on Arabic in Europe, including sustained interest in manuscript studies and Islamic art, it is truly striking that so little attention has been paid to Qur'an manuscripts from Southeast Asia. The problem was addressed by Anthony Johns (1996) in his contribution on Arabic manuscripts to *Illuminations*, who noted that throughout four centuries of Western scholarship on Indonesia, Arabic manuscripts have been an all but invisible presence, ignored by scholars of Indonesian manuscripts for being written in a 'foreign' language. Yet Arabic was at the very heart of the manuscript culture of the Malay world. The arrival of Arabic script in the Malay world was probably the catalyst which precipitated the move to paper (whether imported or locally-made *dluwang*) and away from palm leaf throughout the archipelago, and it is likely royal libraries throughout the Malay world would have been built around a core of books in Arabic.

One root of the problem in according Arabic manuscripts from Southeast Asia their due is the way in which European libraries have traditionally been classified by language rather than by subject or regional origin. Hence manuscripts from Nusantara have always been described and discussed by language, which serves to group together

manuscripts in Malay (whether from say, Johor, Palembang, Banten, Semarang or Lombok), Javanese, Balinese, Sundanese, Acehnese, Batak, and so forth. On the other hand, Arabic manuscripts from Southeast Asia held in Western collections are invariably catalogued and stored away from their Southeast Asian 'brethren' and alongside the much larger numbers of other manuscripts in Arabic from all over the Islamic world, from Morocco to India. Unless there are clear indications of origin within the manuscript which are evident to the cataloguer, their Southeast Asian origin may never be identified or mentioned in such catalogues.

Consequently, Arabic manuscripts are almost never included in catalogues of manuscripts from the Malay world. The otherwise masterly catalogue of *Indonesian manuscripts in Great Britain* (Ricklefs & Voorhoeve, 1977), which stretches its title to encompass manuscripts all Austronesian languages, including Cham and Tausug, does not include Arabic manuscripts from Southeast Asia unless they include elements in an Indonesian language. The resulting portrait of the manuscript traditions of Indonesia is irrevocably skewed by the absence of the Arabic works – pre-eminently the Qur'an – which serve as a key point of reference for so many of the other manuscripts described.

In Europe, the largest collection of Southeast Asian Qur'ans is in the Netherlands, which includes the oldest known Qur'an manuscript from Southeast Asia, presented to a Dutch admiral in Johor in 1606, and now held in the municipal archives in Rotterdam (Riddell, 2002). The Netherlands is also fortunate in having the most satisfactory catalogue, as a hand list of all Arabic manuscripts in the Netherlands was compiled by P. Voorhoeve (1980), at the time Keeper of Oriental manuscripts in Leiden University Library, and a noted scholar of Arabic, Malay, Acehnese, Batak and South Sumatran languages. Combining a knowledge of Arabic with an intimate familiarity with all kinds of Indonesian manuscripts, Voorhoeve was well equipped to recognize the Indonesian origin of an Arabic manuscript – sometimes just on the basis of the paper or the hand – which he duly noted in the hand list, enhancing enormously its value to Indonesian scholars. In this hand list, Voorhoeve grouped together 32 complete Qur'ans of Indonesian origin and 41 manuscripts containing parts of the Qur'an in separate volumes found in nine separate institutions in the

Netherlands, as well as further manuscripts containing parts of the Qur'an found in volumes together with other texts (Voorhoeve, 1980: 77-79). Since then, a few more Qur'an manuscripts from Indonesia have been identified in other Dutch institutions, including the Wereldmuseum Rotterdam (1)<sup>10</sup>, the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam (1)<sup>11</sup>, Nijmeegs Ethnographisch Museum (2)<sup>12</sup>, Utrecht University Library (1), Athenaeum Bibliotheek, Deventer (2), Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde in Leiden (6)<sup>13</sup> and in Leiden University Library (2)<sup>14</sup>. This brings the number of Qur'ans from Southeast Asia in the Netherlands to around 50 volumes of the Qur'an, as well as 42 manuscripts containing selected parts of the Qur'anic text.

The earliest known publication of an image of a Southeast Asian Qur'an manuscript is almost certainly from a Dutch collection: the first edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, published in Leiden in 1913, included an illustration of a detail of the first page of an illuminated Qur'an manuscript, said to be 'written by a Malay' (EI 1913: 1.P1.X). However, the original manuscript (now recognized as being from Aceh) from which the detail is shown has not yet been identified. Images of two more illuminated Qur'an manuscripts from Indonesia were published in 1986 (Witkam, 1986:421,441), but despite the exceptionally important Dutch collections of Qur'an manuscripts from Southeast Asia, it was not until the present century that a more detailed expression of interest in the Indonesian Qur'an as a cultural artefact was published by a Dutch scholar (Wieringa, 2009).

In France, there are five Qur'ans from Java in the Bibliothèque nationale listed by Déroche (1985: 147-9) and the same library also holds two recently acquired Qur'ans, again from Java. In Germany one Javanese Qur'an and one Qur'an from the southern Philippines are held in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, and a Qur'an from Aceh is held in Belgium (Gallop, 2011a). About 10 Qur'an manuscripts from Mindanao, mostly incomplete, are held in US collections (Gallop 2011b, 2011c), while the Art Gallery of South Australia in Adelaide holds six Qur'ans from Madura (Akbar, 2005: 47). Over the past two decades, some Southeast Asian Qur'ans are also known to have entered private and public collections in the Middle East.<sup>15</sup>

## British Collections

A search for Qur'an manuscripts from Southeast Asia in British collections was recently undertaken on the basis of existing catalogues. In view of the important collections of Indonesian manuscripts in British collections, it was expected that a thorough search, however time-consuming and painstaking, would eventually succeed in gathering together a group of Qur'an manuscripts from the Malay world commensurate both in quantity and quality with the Indonesian and Malay manuscripts in British collections.

Yet the search revealed that, despite four centuries of continual contact with the Malay world, until very recently the number of complete Qur'ans from the Malay world held in British institutions was precisely four.<sup>16</sup> Two Javanese Qur'ans from the John Crawfurd collection are in the British Library; a Qur'an with interlinear Malay translation, possibly from Java, is in the Royal Asiatic Society, donated by Admiral Pole in 1830; and a Qur'an from the Philippines was given to Bristol University Library by Bishop Welch in 1936. Three more manuscripts contain portions of the Qur'an, including a manuscript from the Marsden collection in the Library of SOAS, MS 12096 (containing Q. 25:23-29:44), of which Marsden wrote: 'Extracts from the Koran, particularly the Chapter of the Spider. 8vo. (This book having been long used in the administration of Oaths, the cover is soiled by the betel-stained lips of true Believers.)' (Marsden, 1827: 301). This description, which is wholly consistent with the practice of chewing betel in Sumatra and other parts of the Malay world, suggests that the manuscript may have been acquired by Marsden himself in Bengkulu in the late 18th century. More recently, over the past decade the British Library has acquired seven more Qur'an manuscripts from Southeast Asia from older European private collections: three from Aceh, one from Java, one from Madura and one from Patani or Kelantan. This brings the number of Southeast Asian Qur'an manuscripts in British public collections to 11 volumes and three manuscripts with Qur'anic excerpts.

The small number of Southeast Asian Qur'ans in historic British collections is surprising, as is the realisation that there are no Qur'ans among the substantial manuscript collections formed by notable scholars of the Malay world such as Winstedt, Wilkinson, Maxwell,



Farquhar, Mackenzie, Leyden and even Raffles. The case of Raffles is particularly striking. A large portion of his exceptional collection of Javanese manuscripts was acquired during the British attack on the court of Yogyakarta in 1812, during which the royal library was completely ransacked and its collections seized and then shared between Raffles and his officials. According to oral Javanese tradition, Raffles kept many of the most valuable and beautiful volumes for himself, allowing the others to be divided between Crawford and Mackenzie (Carey, 1980: 1). After this incident, only three manuscripts remained in the court library, one of which was a Qur'an (the other two were Javanese texts: *Serat Suryaraja* and *Arjunawiwaha*) (Carey, 1980: 1). That Qur'an is still present today in the Widya Budaya of the Kraton of Yogyakarta, numbered W.330b. According to the colophon on p.575 written in Javanese in *pegon* script, the manuscript was copied between 3 October 1798 and 12 February 1799 in Surakarta by *abdidaem* Ki Atmaparwita. The manuscript is an exceptionally beautiful one, with superb decorated double frames at the beginning, in the middle, and at the start of every *juz*' (Johns, 1996: 35).

Of course, we will never know whether the cargo of the Raffles's ill-fated ship *Fame* – destroyed by fire off the coast of Bengkulu in 1824 – contained Qur'an manuscripts. Therefore more conclusive evidence can be presented in the case of Colin Mackenzie, who served with Raffles in Java, and who in the course of his long sojourn in India and Southeast Asia formed a much larger collection of thousands of manuscripts. This collection was catalogued in 1828 (apart from those Malay and Javanese manuscripts which had already been sent to London earlier). It lists hundreds of manuscripts in Sanskrit, Hindi and Persian, and thousands in south Indian languages such as Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, but only 8 in Arabic, with not a single complete Qur'an, although it included a small volume containing two surahs. Thus not only did Mackenzie not collect Qur'ans from Java, neither did he do so in India, despite years dedicated to collecting manuscripts. The most obvious interpretation is a consistent lack of interest in Islam and its theological – as opposed to literary or historical – manifestations in the Malay world, by British scholars of manuscripts.<sup>17</sup>

## **Future Directions**

No comprehensive survey of Qur'an manuscripts from Southeast Asia has yet been carried out. About ten years ago I had documented a total of around 750 complete Qur'ans from Southeast Asia held worldwide, as well as other volumes containing parts of the Qur'an, but this is doubtless an underestimate. Ali Akbar is currently working on a Ph.D. at Universitas Indonesia on Southeast Asian Qur'an manuscripts, which includes a statistical survey of Qur'an manuscripts held in Indonesia and elsewhere, which will yield more precise figures. Conversely, in Southeast Asia, even though the majority of Qur'an manuscripts found are indubitably of local origin, there are also a small number of foreign Qur'ans which are not always identified as such in the published literature, mostly from India or the Ottoman world, and probably brought back by pilgrims from the Hajj. Such manuscripts are of interest in themselves as evidence of cultural contact and influences, but should be treated separately in any study of Qur'an manuscripts from Southeast Asia.

As can be seen from the survey above, although in some cases Southeast Asian Qur'an manuscripts have been present in library and museum collections for several centuries, the appreciation and study of these manuscripts as cultural treasures is a very recent phenomenon, with its origins only around the 1980s. One of the main catalysts for present-day interest was probably the Festival Istiqlal in Jakarta in 1991, and at present the major work of documenting and publishing Southeast Asian Qur'an manuscripts – in many cases from previously unknown collections – is being led by various agencies of the Kementerian Agama in Indonesia. In Malaysia, the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia plays the main role in positioning Qur'an manuscripts in the popular consciousness, particularly through exhibitions and high-profile publications.

Although the basic work of documentation will doubtless continue, with such a richness of Qur'an manuscripts already now revealed, perhaps this is an opportune moment to take stock of the situation and suggest areas for future research. This would include a plea for a pan-Southeast Asian approach. To best understand these Qur'an manuscripts, we need to study them in their full cultural context, with the concept of Nusantara understood as not referring just

to Indonesia, but to all Islamic regions of Southeast Asia, ranging from Aceh to Patani and on to Campa, Brunei and Sulu, thus transcending present-day political boundaries. Qur'an manuscripts from Terengganu were exported as far afield as Palembang and Pontianak, while Sulawesi-style Qur'ans have been documented in Mindanao.

Another matter for attention is that with the proliferation of published studies on Qur'an manuscripts, there appears to be a need for greater cross-referencing to other publications on similar topics. This would enable studies to build upon one another, with a cumulative benefit for the good of scholarship, rather than covering the same basic ground again and again.

Although it is certain that known numbers of Qur'an manuscripts from Southeast Asia will continue to rise with better documentation, nonetheless, it is now possible to ask questions about the actual role of Qur'an manuscripts in Islamic societies in Southeast Asia and elsewhere. It appears that the actual numbers of Qur'an manuscripts documented is relatively small, even compared to other Islamic manuscript works, for example on fiqh or Arabic grammar. This is particularly striking when we look at the composition of collections of manuscripts held in *pesantren*, and for example the collections digitised through the Endangered Archives Programme by Dr Amiq Ahyad at three pesantren in East Java – Pesantren Langitan in Tuban, Pesantren Tarbiyya al-Talabah in Keranji, and Pesantren Tegalsari, Jetis Ponorogo – yielded 302 titles, but included only one Qur'an. The catalogue of the Dayah Tanoh Abee collection by Oman Fathurahman, which admittedly only covered part of the collection, did not describe a single Qur'an. Such research should also include a comparative element, looking at other Islamic societies in India and the Middle East, where perhaps the situation was similar. Was it perhaps the case that at least by the end of the 19th century, printed Qur'ans had come to play a seminal role in Islamic pedagogy in Southeast Asia? Or did the socio-economic factors involved in copying a full Qur'an manuscript ensure that a copy of the Holy Book would always have been a luxury, reserved only for privileged circles? This is just one area suggested for further research into the role and function of Qur'an manuscripts in Southeast Asia.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> The Mushaf Istiqlal was the catalyst for similar endeavours in Malaysia and Brunei, with the publication of 'national' Qur'ans.
- <sup>2</sup> <http://eap.bl.uk/index.a4d>
- <sup>3</sup> Since 2012, continuing an earlier blog. <http://quran-nusantara.blogspot.co.uk/>
- <sup>4</sup> Hermankhan: portal manuskrip Aceh dan Jawi. <http://www.hermankhan.com/>
- <sup>5</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/groups/SAHABAT.MAPESA/>
- <sup>6</sup> Now known as JAKIM, Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia.
- <sup>7</sup> The initial remit of the Pusat Manuskrip Melayu did not include Arabic manuscripts. In fact, Arabic manuscripts, including Qur'an manuscripts, have been present in the collection since its inception, but these were initially not listed in the published catalogues of the Pusat Manuskrip Melayu.
- <sup>8</sup> JAKIM, Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (Department for the Development of Islam, Malaysia); Ali 1997: 109, n.4.
- <sup>9</sup> Including Muzium Negara (3), Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (1), Muzium Negeri Terengganu, Muzium Kota Tinggi Johor, and the private collection of Dr Muhammad Pauzi Abdul Latif on display in Muzium Warisan Melayu, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Serdang.
- <sup>10</sup> WMR 2597, from Aceh.
- <sup>11</sup> KIT 3355/1, from Aceh.
- <sup>12</sup> NEM 3371, from Aceh; 6111.
- <sup>13</sup> RMV 03-239; 3600-453 (second half only, from Bone, dated 1281 (1864/5 AD); 3600-10105, from Aceh; 3600-10106, from Sumatra; 3760-48, from Aceh.
- <sup>14</sup> Cod.Or.14275 (Witkam 1986: 421-2); Cod.Or.14317 (Witkam 1986: 441-2).
- <sup>15</sup> See, for example, Safwat 1997: 89; Safwat 2000, these MSS are now in the Museum of Islamic Art, Doha.
- <sup>16</sup> A Qur'an held in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge (R.14.59) was described by Palmer (1870: 174) as 'The Qur'an. A carelessly written copy in a Malay hand, with tawdry coloured borders' and later by Browne (1922: 153) as 'carelessly written in what appears to me a Malay hand'. This manuscript was inspected on 2.5.2003 and found not be Malay, but possibly of Central Asian or Indian Ocean provenance.
- <sup>17</sup> Notably, such an attitude only changed in the Netherlands in the late 19th century due to the endeavours of Snouck Hurgronje and others, which resulted in a large number of Islamic manuscripts entering Dutch collections.

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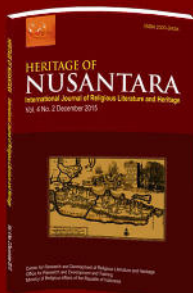
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