

The *Jawi* Manuscript: Its History, Role, and Function in the Malay Archipelago

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Abstract

Research on *Jawi* manuscripts is an important aspect of knowledge and it has received wide acceptance especially among Western scholars. The discoveries made by this research enrich the treasure of knowledge. Such research was started in 16th century A.D. by Dutch scholars, followed by British and other European scholars, who were the ex-colonial powers in the Malay Archipelago. Their aim was to understand the thinking and the way of life of the Malays in order to facilitate the colonization and administration of the territories under their rule. A large portion of works on Islam produced in the Malay Archipelago is still in the form of manuscripts. There are more than 28 countries in the world that are keeping *Jawi* manuscripts. Although the number of *Jawi* manuscripts on Islam is said to be small, compared to those on legends and literature for example, manuscript researchers have given Islamic *Jawi* manuscripts special attention because Islamic studies are the foundation for Malay studies and the forerunner to the development of Malay literature in the Malay Archipelago. This paper is an attempt to highlight the *Jawi* manuscript about its definition, writing history and culture, the influence of Arabic language and Islam on its writing culture and instruments, its role and function in the Malay World.

Definition of the Manuscript:

A manuscript is an "original, handwritten piece of writing that is unprinted." Manuscript writing began about 2000 years ago, i.e. since the arrival of the Hindus from India in the first century A.D. naturally, the materials used to write manuscripts at that time were those brought from India. The oldest inscriptions found in this region are in the form of stone tablets inscribed with eulogies in memory of the good work of past personages. For this and for other purposes of recording incidents, they had also used other materials such as clay, metal and palm leaves. The Indians had introduced the art of writing on *tala* leaves, which was later known as *lontar* (the palmyra palm) and *nipah* (palm) in Java. In Java the art of writing on *lontar* and *nipah* was famous. The Malays also used bamboos and barks as materials for the writing of manuscripts.

Actually, the Malays learned about paper from the Chinese but it was in the form of currency. During the Hindu/Buddhist era, they did not obtain paper as material for writing. The unavailability of paper at that time became evident with the arrival of **I-Tsing**, a Chinese Buddhist traveler, who has stopped over at Sumatra on the way to India to collect written materials on Buddhism. When he ran out of paper and ink, **I-Tsing** had to return to China for supplies because he could not find paper or a paper factory in Sumatra or anywhere else in Southeast Asia. **I-Tsing** was in Sumatra for four years during which time he was said to have found almost 400 manuscripts containing Buddhism texts to be brought to China. This incident took place at the end of the 7th century A.D.²

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²(Bernard H.M., *Vlekke Nusantara: A History of Indonesia*, The Hague: W. Van Hoeve 1959: 28; Asma bt Ahmat, *Malay Manuscripts: Tradition and Documentation*, M.A. Thesis, School of Library, Archive and Information Studies, University College, London, October 1986, p. 1.

Islamic and Arabic Influence on Jawi Manuscript Writing Instruments

Viewed from historical perspective, it cannot be denied that Arabic language and Islam were the foundation for the advent of the *Jawi* manuscripts. It is impossible to separate these two aspects because the main source of Islam is the Holy Qur'an, which is written in Arabic. The early missionaries (*du'at*) that came to this region were all Arabs hence Arabic influence in the Malay language was more dominant compared to that of other foreign languages, including Persian (although its alphabets are almost similar to Arabic alphabets). This is because Arabic is the language of the Qur'an. For purposes of propagation and education, the missionaries had to write and translate the Qur'an and other religious books from Arabic to Malay and thus the *Jawi* manuscripts were born.

There are several important terms used for *Jawi* manuscripts instruments that have been borrowed from Arabic, for example, the word "*kertas*" (Arabic *qirtas*) (English: paper), "*dakwa*" (Arabic *dawat*) (English: inkhorn) and "*pena*" (Arabic *qalam*) (English: pen). These three terms are writing instruments used to produce manuscripts. Prior to the age of Islam in the Archipelago, the above-mentioned writing instruments were unknown because as said earlier, written notes were mostly made on stones, leaves, wood (*lontar*, *nipah*) and metal.

The Arabs had known paper since the mid 7th century A.D.; the papers were imported from China. After that, about 704 A.D., the paper-making technology was brought from China to Muslim countries via Samarkand. In 794 A.D. prior to the establishment of a paper factory in Baghdad, the paper-making technique was further developed until they were able to produce several grades of paper: thick, medium and thin. Thin paper was usually used for correspondence while thick and medium thick papers were used for the writing of books/manuscripts. The paper-making industry then spread from Baghdad to other Muslim cities until it was no longer difficult to find the above-mentioned materials. This had ultimately increased writing and translating activities among the Muslims.³ During the time of the Ma'mun Caliphate (813-833 A.D) correspondence activities had reached its peak with the establishment of the *Bait al-Hikmah* in Baghdad, which became the centre of knowledge, including book collection activities and the production of written works and translations during the Abbasid period.

With the technological development in paper production came the development in the production of ink because without ink, there can be no writing on paper. It was said that ink production technology was known to the Arabs before or at the time the Qur'an was revealed, i.e. through Egyptian merchants. This was substantiated by the fact that some of the companions of the Prophet *sallallahu `alaihiwasallam* at that time were already experts at writing khat (calligraphy) and one of them was Sayyidina `Ali b. Abi Talib, who was said to be an expert in the *Kufikhat*.⁴ Arab and Persian missionaries and merchants who came to Southeast Asia also brought along with them papers and ink for writing, note-taking and commerce. Apart from the Arabs and the Persians, there were other races, including Europeans such as Dutch, the Portuguese, the Spanish, and the English, who had also imported and brought paper to Southeast Asia. However, it was much later that paper was imported from Europe. According to a written note, the first Europeans to bring paper to this region were the Spanish in the year 1521 A.D. Pigafetta, in writing on the historical travels of Magellan, had reported that paper was one of the gifts that he had brought to present to the Sultan of Brunei:

"The Present intended to the King consisted...three packets of paper and a gilt pen and ink case... and for the herald... a cap and a packet of paper. For the other seven chief men... for one cloth, for another a cap and for each a packet of paper."⁵ The above extract illustrates that paper was a valuable product that was difficult to obtain in Southeast Asia because the paper-using community, which was restricted to courtiers and intellectuals, was very small and also because there was no paper factory in this region. The difficulty of obtaining paper in the Archipelago was mentioned by famous Malay writers such as Nur al-Din al-Raniri in the book *Bustan al-Salatin*.⁶

³Brian Stock, "Science, technology and Economic Progress in the Early Middle Ages", in D. Lindberg (editor) *Science in the Middle Ages*, 1978, pp. 13-14.

⁴Refer to Mahayudin Hj Yahaya, *Ensiklopedia of Islamic History (Ensiklopedia Sejarah Islam)*, UKM, Bangi, Vol. V, S-T, pp. 1655-1662.

⁵Asma bt. Ahmat, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

⁶Refer to the edition of the Royal Asiatic Society; MS Raffles 8.

With the arrival of the English in the 17th century, paper became important merchandise traded by merchants from the East India Company. Among the merchants of this company were Sambrooke and Thomas Papillion. Paper from England was marketed in ports of Bantam and Jambi.⁷ Every shipment brought in 50-60 reams (each ream contained 480-500 pieces) of imported paper. In 1771, the total amount of paper imported from England was valued at 253 and 623 pound sterling. Although the papers came from England, the factories that produced them were in France, Holland, and Italy. At that time, only red, low quality paper was produced in England while white, high quality paper came from other countries. It was only at the end of the 18th century that England started to produce good quality white paper comparable to the papers from Italy, France, and Holland. Although there was paper from Europe, paper from China, India, and Arabia continued to be used in this region. Hence, today, we find *Jawi* manuscript papers categorized as "European paper (thick)" and "Eastern paper (thin)" from Arabia, China and India.

Another writing instrument used in producing *Jawi* manuscripts was the ink. There were various types of inks: some were imported while others were locally produced. Those that were imported came from Arabia, India and China. There were two types of inks used among the Muslims – the *dudu* and the *hibr*. *Dudu* was made from black dust (ash) that was mixed with honey gum and other additives while *hibr* was made from coconut shells. Obviously these two inks came from Arabia because the word *hibr* originates from the Arabic word meaning ink. Samples of ink from Arabia were brought to this region by missionaries and merchants but when they run out, they had to produce ink from local substances, which naturally were different from those used in Arabia. Technologically however, there was no difference. Usually, the Malays produced ink from soot resin or charcoal that was grounded and mixed with gum and honey. There were also other substances used to make ink. It was reported that ink from China was also used and became famous in several areas. For example, it was reported that the inhabitants of Moluccas had used Chinese ink in 1544 A.D. The ink, which was hard and black, was placed in a fine, wooden box. When it was to be used, some water would be added to the ink to make it soft and liquid.

Another writing instrument used in producing *Jawi* manuscripts was the pen or more accurately, the *kalam* (Arabic: *qalam*). The word *qalam* is written in the Qur`an, in surah al-`Alaq verse 4, which translated to mean: "(God) has thought man by the *qalam*". This means that the mode of transferring knowledge proposed by the Qur`an among others, is through writing by using the *kalam*. Prior to the revelation of the Qur`an, knowledge was commonly transferred orally or from mouth to mouth. *Kalam* was made from wood or bamboo that has been sharpened at the tip to the required size.

The Reading and Writing Culture

The arrival of Islam represented the moment of transition in the history of this region. It had not only changed the beliefs of the Malays – from worshipping the firmaments and idols to worshipping Allah, the One God – but also their thinking and outlook on life. They had also accepted the learning culture brought by Islam to this region, i.e. the reading and writing culture. The reading and writing culture had indeed been the keen interest of religious scholars since long ago till today. This interest and keenness were inspired by Islamic teaching itself so that the knowledge that is written down can be read and subsequently spread for the benefit of the society. The first Qur`anic verse revealed by Allah to Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. stated with the word "*iqra`*" (read!). In this context, Allah says:

"Read! In the Name of your Lord, Who has created (all that exists), has created man from a clot (a piece of thick coagulated blood). Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous, Who has taught (the writing) by the pen, has taught man that which he knew not"⁸

The above verse proves that the reading culture is basic in Islam education. This is why the Qur`a stresses on aspects of reading and writing from the start. The word "*iqra`*" in this verse has the meaning of "read", "learn" and "study". The second important characteristic is the concept of "servitude to Allah", which is contained in the words "In the Name of your Lord". This means that every reading, writing and study activity must be carried out for the purpose of obtaining the pleasure of Allah Ta`ala. The third important characteristic is the language factor.

⁷E.B. Sainsbury, *A Calendar of the Court Minutes etc., of the East India Company 1677-1679*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929:307 & 1938, p. 248.

⁸Al-Qur`an, Surah al-`Alaq (96) :1-5

The Qur'an was revealed in Arabic and contains I'jaz element (the superiority of the Arabic language that is unmatched by other languages in the world). This is why it has become the language of knowledge and civilization. Past Muslim religious scholars, including the Persians, Turks, Indians, and Malays, had studied and used the Arabic language as the language of knowledge, especially Islamic knowledge. The three characteristics mentioned above form the basis or the framework of the developmental history of Islamic knowledge in the Archipelago. Equipped with the above-mentioned spirit and characteristics, the pens of the religious scholars hardly rested, as though their ideas flowed continuously through their pens. Hundreds of thousands of religious essays/books essays have since been produced by scholars from western and Central Asia. This culture of writing and producing essays is adhered to by the Malay religious scholars in the archipelago, from the time they first knew Islam until today. The government, whether in Perlak, Samudera-Parsi, Aceh, Malacca, Brunei Darussalam, Riau or other countries within the Archipelago, always provided encouragement and facilities to the scholars to write and to propagate religious knowledge within the country.

The culture of transcribing, translating and adapting foreign, especially Arabic and Persian works, were indeed common practice. Since the works were translations and adaptations, the ideas and thinking reflect those of the original writers. Some of the important disciplines that were widespread in the Archipelago were *tauhid* (monotheism) *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and *tasawwuf* (mysticism) or ethics. Sometimes *tasawwuf* was combined with Philosophy and it was known as "Philosophical *tasawwuf*" (the science of *tasawwuf* discussed employing philosophical principles). Which was once a formal school of thought in this region? Due to this, there had been several Malay intellectuals who were creative and who had potentials such as Nur al-Din al-Raniri and Hamzah Fansuri, who extensively discussed the concept of "*wujudiyah*" (*wahdah al-wujud*), a branch of philosophical *tasawwuf*, in the 17th century and who received the attention of the *Jawi* manuscript/book researchers.

The Writing of the *Jawi* Manuscripts

There is a theory that states that the process of writing *Jawi* manuscripts was already well developed in the 15th century A.D. and had reached its peak in the 17th century A.D. This was because, as agreed by almost all Malay manuscript researchers, Islamic knowledge in the Archipelago had reached the pinnacle of its glory then.⁹ However, there was no consensus on when the task of writing the *Jawi*-Malay manuscripts started and which *Jawi*-Malay manuscript was the oldest in the Archipelago. According to De Casparis, the writing of the *Jawi*-Malay manuscripts began in the year 1500 A.D.¹⁰ this opinion was similar to that of John's.¹¹

Meanwhile, S.van Ronkel (has said that the oldest *Jawi*-Malay manuscript dated 1600 A.D.¹² With the discovery of the Book *ʿAqaʿid al-Nasafi*, which was dated 16th century A.D., Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas indirectly rejected Ronkel's opinion.¹³ This issue has not been resolved because there are indications that there are *Jawi*-Malay manuscripts that are older than the ones mentioned above. These manuscripts, entitled *Sharh al-ʿAwamil fi Bayan ʿIlm al-Nahw*, are still kept in the Universitaats bibliothek, Marburg, Germany (L.S. Cod.H.). According to al-Toma, this book was written in the 13th century A.D. In fact, even prior to that, another book was discovered entitled *Bahr al-Lahut*, written by ʿAbdullah ʿArif and dated 12th century A.D. This book is still in the form of a manuscript. It is a book of philosophical *tasawwuf* that discusses two main subjects, i.e. the Nur of Muhammad (s.a.w.) and the Seven Stations. These teachings of ʿAbdullah ʿArif spread widely in Perlak and is considered by historians, including T. Arnold, as the earliest teachings to first reach this region. The book was written in Arabic and translated to Malay but the date or time of translation was not mentioned. However, due to the needs of the Malay community, which did not understand Arabic at that time, a Malay version became necessary in order that Islamic teachings may be understood. In view of this need, it is assumed that the duration between the date of its arrival and the date of the book's translation was not long.

⁹Asma bt. Ahmat, 1986, p. 13.

¹⁰Bemard, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

¹¹Refer to Mc Vey, Ruth T (ed.), *Indonesia*, New Haven: HRAF Press, 1963, p. 410.

¹²Ph. S. van Ronkel, "Account of Six Malay Manuscripts of the University Library", *BKI*, 6e, *Volgr* II, 1896.

¹³Syed Naquib Al-Attas, *The Oldest Known Malay Manuscript: A 16th Century Malay Translation of the ʿAqaʿid of al-Nasafi*, University of Malaya Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1989.

To date, there are two copies of the *Bahr al-Lahut*: the first is kept in the Tgk. Chiek Zauyah Ancient Library, Tanoh Abee, Big Aceh while the second copy was found in Kampung Pernu, Malacca. Both copies do not state when the book was written. However, its writer, `Abdullah `Arif, was a well-known missionary in this region and had lived in the 12th century A.D.

Format of the Jawi Manuscript

There were several important features in relation to the format, properties and form of the Jawi-Malay manuscript in the Archipelago some of which are: the name of the writer, the translator, the transcriber, the title, the date it was written, translated transcribed; content, illustration, and decoration of the manuscript.

Nama of the writer

Most Jawi manuscript do not state the name of the writer, transcriber or translator. This is inspired by the values of the Malay society itself, which were much influenced by Islamic values. Islam teaches its followers to be *tawaddu`* (humble) and not to draw attention to oneself, in other words not to be *anani* (individualistic). Being *tawadu`* is a way of life for some Malay religious scholars (*ulama`*). They do not like to attract attention but this does not mean that they are afraid of threats or of having differences of opinion from other writers or readers., rather it was the norm in the Malay society not to favour drawing attention to oneself in a manner that was direct and obvious.¹⁴ This was especially so if the writer practiced tasawwuf. One of the most evident characteristics of those who practice tasawwuf is *zuhd* (asceticism). A zahid (an ascetic) does not like to be hypocritical or to draw attention to himself and make a name for himself in search of fame because all of these may lead to despicable trait such as showing off and being arrogant. In order to avoid such ignoble traits, they deliberately conceal their names. Instead, they refer to themselves as "*faqir*" (poor and lowly) or the "*faqir*" who is *da`if* (weak) or simply "*al-faqir*". If the writer's name is printed on a manuscript, normally it would have been written by either the transcriber, the translator or he owner of the manuscript. Usually they are relatives either of the writer or his friends or students.

If it was a transcriber {who had written the writer's name}, he would usually use the term "*katib*" (scribe) and he would state his name at the end of the manuscript while the writer's name would be at the beginning. For example, "*qala` Abdullah qaddasallahruhahu*" (Abdullah has said, may Allah bless him). However, if it was written by the owner of the manuscript, then the name of the writer would be written on the side or outside the manuscript.

In certain case, the writer himself had attempted to associate his name with that of the writing but indirectly, i.e. by referring readers to his earlier writings, as printed in the book *Sharh Jawharah al-Tawhid* (refer to *al-Risalah*, written by Shihab al-Din Jawi). The role played by the transcriber, the translator and the owner of the manuscript is important indeed for apart from preserving the writer's they also serve as inheritors and propagators of knowledge. Without their work, many Malay manuscripts would surely not have been discovered until today.

Traditionally, it is common practice for the Malay religious scholar to perpetuate the knowledge obtained from his teacher, which would then be passed down by his students to the next generation. For example, the book *Durr al-Farid bi Sharh al-`Aqa`id*, written by al-Sheikh Nur al-Din bin Ali Hasanji bin Muhammad al-Raniri, is a translation of his teacher's book entitled *Sharh al-`Aqa`id*, written by Imam Sa`d al-Din al-Taftazani i.e. a commentary on the book *Mukhtasar al-`Aqa`id*, written by Imam Najm al-Din `Umar al-Nasafi. Similarly too was the book *Kashf al-Muntazar li-ma Yarah al-Muhtadar*, written by Burhan al-Din al-Kurani, but it was later translated and rearranged by one of his students, `Abd al-Ra`uf bin `Ali. On top of that, he had also expressed his opinions to such an extent that there were some who have said that the book was in fact written by `Abd al-Ra`uf himself. However, after careful study, it was found that the real writer was indeed Burhan al-Din al-Kurani.

In this instance `Abd al-Ra`uf can be considered as the co-author of the book *Kasyf al-Muntazar* and Nur al-Din al-Raniri the co-author of *Durr al-Farid bi Sharh al-`Aqa`id*. Furthermore, transcribers were free to transcribe, transfer or alter words they object to from the original writing. This was permitted by the original writer himself because usually, at the end of the manuscript, the writer expresses his willingness to be corrected or criticised if deemed to be erroneous by the reader, or for his view to be corrected.

¹⁴Amin Sweeney, *Author and Audiences in Traditional Malay Literature*, Berkeley: Centre for South and South-East Asia Studies, University of California, 1980: 25; Asma bt. Ahmat, *op. cit.* p.24).

They realized that knowledge is wide and is constantly developing and only Allah knows the truth. Hence, they never fail to say "*wallahu `a`lam*" (Allah knows Best) at the end of their compositions, including great religious scholars like Hamzah Fansuri and Nur al-Din al-Raniri. This has resulted in the emergence of critics and consequently a polemic among the religious scholars, which in turn produced even more personalities and writers, some were supportive while others were not. Hence the process of writing, transcribing and translating religious books continues. The transcriber or translators often make changes, either intentionally or unintentionally, to the original work. Sometimes these changes lead to improvements but sometimes the reverse happens, depending on the transcribers or translator's level of knowledge.

Many mistakes in the Arabic spelling have been discovered in the manuscript that have been translated or transcribed or recopied. This is because the transcriber was not careful or knowledgeable in Arabic. There are mistakes during the process of transcribing and translating, which are not only in language but also in the content of the manuscript. For example, *Durr al-Farid bi Sharh al-`Aqa`id* by Nur al-Din al-Raniri, was written *Dhurr al-Farid bi Sharh al-`Aqa`id* and *Mir`at al-Qur`an* by Abd al-Mu`ti bin Muhammad Saleh was written *Mir`at al-Qurra`*. Further examples are manuscripts from abroad, i.e. *Hujjah al-Siddiq li-Daf`i al-Zindiq*, written by Nur al-Din al-Raniri, which has two different versions – the Aceh` copy is different from the Leiden copy and similarly the book *`Aqidah al-`Awam*, written by Abu al-Fauz al-Marzuqi, where the copy from Leiden differs from that of the Royal Asiatic Society, London. Due to these changes and mistakes, whether intentional or unintentional, made by the transcribers and translators, the quality of the manuscripts has been compromised and they have lost their originality. Furthermore, due to the additions (*sharh*) to the original text, in this case he book *Mukhtasar al-`Aqa`id* by Najm al-Din `Umar al-Nasafi, which was commented on by Sa`d al-Din al-Taftazani in *Sharh al-`Aqa`id*, and which was later translated by Nur al-Din al-Raniri in *Durr al-Farid bi Sharh al-`Aqa`id* and which was later translated by Nur al-Din al-Raniri in *Durr al-Farid bi Sharh al-`Aqa`id*, manuscript researchers have taken these people to be the "co-authors" of the books.

Title of Book in the Jawi Manuscript

Usually, the book title in the Jawi manuscript was either stated in the beginning or at the end of the book; and sometimes it was not stated anywhere. There are several factors for this. First, the front and back sections of the book were lost or destroyed, second, it was due to the transcriber's forgetfulness, and third, due to a secret scheme. Originally, every book that was written would have a title known to the general public at that time. However, due to the lapse in time and changes in the transcription process, the book title, which was already widely known, was deemed no longer important. For example in the collection of book (*Majmu`ah NUS 5*) there were several books and fragments that had no title. When these were read, it was found that much of their content resembled that of the book *Umm al-Barahin*, written by Muhammad Zain bin al-Faqih Jalaluddin. In such a case, the Malay manuscript researchers who did not study the content of the book or did not compare it to other books would face difficulties in determining the book's real title. Sometimes they make a new title that would fit the content or they would have to forget about the book title by simply stating "no title".

Resorting to introducing new book titles or stating "no title" is a simple solution that is not academic. It is the same with cases in which the author's name is absent due to the various factors mentioned above. The title of the book or the author's name can be obtained from other manuscripts because usually there is more than one copy of a Jawi manuscript. Even if a certain manuscript does not state its title or the author's name, the author usually mentions the titles of his other books when he presents his views in a new book that he has written. Nur al-Din al-Raniri, for example, often does this.

In certain cases, there are books that have two titles; the original title in Arabic and the translated title in Malay. For example, the book *`Aqidah al-`Awam* (Arabic), in Malay title is a "*Simpulan Iman Bagi Orang Awam*" (Belief for the Common Man). However, both titles are similar in meaning and are not confusing. Usually writers of religious books use Arabic titles for their work while the Malay titles are simply the translated version. The same applies to other areas as well, for example in literature, history or historical literature and narratives, where they have been two different titles in one piece of work.

For example, the original title of the book *Sejarah Melayu* (Malay Annals) was *Sulalat as-Salatin* which was translated into Regulations of all Monarchs. Cases such as this are not found in the collection of manuscripts in the Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Islamic Exhibition Gallery.

Dating the Jawi Manuscripts

There are many books in the Jawi manuscript that are dateless, in other words the date was not stated in the writing, in the translation or in the copy. In golden times, dates, or chronological dating are not considered important especially in religious books. It was the same for names of the authors. As mentioned above, it was as though they had deliberately refrained from disclosing or they had preferred that the name and the date of the book that they had written remained unknown because to them such things were unimportant. What was more important were the knowledge and information that were to be conveyed to the reader. At any rate, they contemporaries, or people living around the time the book was written, were sure to know who the author was and where it was written. In other words, at the time the book was written, they did not think that the chronological aspect was important. Perhaps they were following the example of the al-Qur`an. The Holy Qur`an, which contains injunctions and prohibitions of Allah upon mankind, did not require a chronological aspect, not even a historical (*qissah*) link, much less one that is linked to laws and rules. A Muslim man will not question the truth of the Qur`an because it is divine revelation from Allah Ta`ala. From another aspect, al-Qur`an, for example, talks about the conflict between the *haq* and *batil* (between truth and falsehood). The law on *haq* and *batil* or on *ma`ruf* (good) and *mungkar* (evil), committed by man at any place and time, remains the same. It is from this example that the religious scholars learned not to place importance on the chronological aspect in the writing of a book.

From the above, it can therefore be summarised that realization of the importance of the chronological aspect in the writing of religious books was almost non-existent among the Malay religious scholars. Even work that could be categorized as "historical writing such as the book *Sejarah Melayu* (Malay History)" did not place an importance on the chronological aspect despite it being a foundation in history. Hence we dare say that before the 20th century A.D. there was no real historical work in this region; what existed were "historical literature" or literature books that contain historical facts, including the book *Sejarah Melayu*, which was compiled by Tun Seri Lanag. Since chronology was deemed unimportant, it is therefore not surprising that we should find many Jawi manuscript that are dateless with no mention of where and when they were produced. C. Skinner a Western researcher of Malay manuscripts, acknowledged this by saying that:

"It is enough to be able to identify the author of a classical Malay work, rare still to be able to identify author and date".¹⁵

According to him, although the date was printed on the work, it cannot be completely relied on without taking into consideration several other factors concerning the interior and the exterior aspects of the manuscript; for example what is written in the text, the script style or form, the condition of the manuscript paper, the binding date, etc. Sometimes the printed date refers to the date the work was transcribed and translated and not the date it was written. At other times, the date given is general, for example, it refers to a certain period or time, such as the reign of a certain king in this region. For example, the book *Asrar al-Insan fi Ma`rifah al-Ruhwa al-Rahman*, by Nur al-Din al-Raniri, was written during the reign of Iskandar Thani, but the exact date was not given. It was the same with the books *Bidayah al-Mubtadi`* (NUS 11), *Mawa`iz al-Badi`* (NUS 30), *Mir`at al-Qurra`* (NUS 350) and many others. There are many other books that only state the time the books were copied/written without the month and the year, for example, the book *Sharh `Ala al-Laqqani, Jawharah al-Tawhid*, written by Ibrahim states "This book was completed on Friday, at the time of *Duha* (forenoon)".

Generally, the date that is given is not quantitative. Past Malay religious scholars frequently employed a system in which letters were used to signify a specific time, Every letter had a specific number. For example, in the book *Tahsil Nail al-Maram li Bayan Manzumat `Aqidah al-`Awam* it is stated on the colophon that the book is dated (لي (حي غر ل = 30, ي = 10, ح = 8, ي = 10 total = 58, غ = 200, ر = 1000 total = 1200. Grand total = 58 + 1200 = 1258.

¹⁵M. Nijhoff, 1963: 43.

The text Format in the Jawi Manuscripts

The text format in Jawi manuscript is the same with printed books. Containing introduction, content and conclusion, and they were written either in the form of a poetry or a prose. With regard to the title page. It can be said that almost all Jawi manuscript do not have one, going straight to the introduction instead. The introduction begins with *basmalah (bismillahi al-Rahmani al-Rahim)* and praises to Allah and His Messenger as well as the companions of the Prophet; sometimes a *du`a`* (supplication) is also included. In the writing of letters, books or in delivering sermons. Islamic doxology had existed in writing since the first hijrah century (7th century C.E) and it has been maintained until today. Usually, the praises are written in Arabic accompanied with a Malay translation.

Other than doxology, important details such as the title, the content, the field and the type of book – a translation or an original work – and a synopsis of the book are displayed in the introduction. This is why many Jawi manuscript researchers pay special attention to the introduction. The same applies to the conclusion (colophon). A similar method is often used by Malay manuscript catalogue compilers. The aim is to obtain a summary of the manuscript without referring to its actual content. In certain cases such as method may lead to problems and may produce inaccurate information because sometimes the date given in the introduction is incomplete. For example, the book *Kashf al-Muntazar* consistently states that it was written by `Abd al-Ra`uf bin `Ali because his name was mentioned in the introduction. However, after examining its content, it was discovered that the author was actually Burhan al-Din Malik Ibrahim bin Hasan al-Kurani, while `Abd al-Ra`uf was the translator or editor. Due to the addition and adaptation he had made, he may even be categorized as the co-author.

Illustration/Diagrams

Traditionally, Malay correspondence, as illustrated in the book/Jawi manuscript, did not contain illustrations or diagrams. This was due to two factors. Firstly, Islam prohibits its followers to draw pictures of human beings to be made into statues. In fact, some schools prohibit not only the carving not only human statues but also the drawing of human pictures for ornamental purposes. Hence, it is not surprising that Jawi books do not contain human image or diagrams referred to as “illustrations”. Images or diagrams of human beings are usually found in medical books/manuscripts., books on incantations, divinations, or pharmacology and not in religious books written by religious scholars in this region. Secondly, in the past, there was no photographic equipment like the camera. Had there been such equipment, or had it been accessible. Perhaps photographs of non-human images or that of non-living things, permitted by Islam, for example the photograph of a mosque, prayer hall, palace and grave, might have been displayed. However, interest in art, including in carving, calligraphy (*khatt*) and in the decorations found in some books, remained. However, this phenomenon was uncommon and if it did exist, it came about rather late.

The art found in Jawi books/manuscripts depicts Islamic art, for example, a decorated frame that surrounds the text is usually placed at the beginning or at the end of the book – akin to the inscribed frame of today` al-Qur`an. The said illustration contains colorful leaves and flowers in red, black, yellow and green. Sometimes, the frame that surrounds the text of a Jawi book originates from the Arab or Persian tradition, which had been firmly established since the beginning of Islam. However, Islamic artwork among the Malays may be said to be non-progressive and uncreative because they paid more attention to religion than to art.¹⁶

Cataloguing of the Jawi Manuscripts

According to the records, Malay manuscripts were first catalogued in 1696 by Melchione Leydecker, followed by Valentyn (17270 and Werndly (1736). Work on the documentation and cataloguing of Malay books/manuscripts was seriously undertaken at the end of the 19th century and in the beginning of the 20th century. During this time, they were able to compile and publish several catalogues on the Malay manuscripts found all over the world. They were also successful, albeit not completely, in separating Malay copies from copies in Javanese, Sundanese, Batak, and other languages found in the Archipelago (source: Location and number of Malay manuscripts discovered all over the world (not including TanohAbee and Thailand). Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia (National Library of Malaysia).¹⁷

¹⁶Asma bt Ahnmat, *op.cit*, p.38.

¹⁷Location and number of Malay manuscripts discovered in the world, see Mahayudin Hj Yahaya, *Karya Klasik Melayu-Islam*, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kuala Lumpur, 2000. There is a total of 708 manuscripts listed in the List of Manuscripts in the

The Function and the Role of the *Jawi* Manuscript

Jawi manuscripts had played an active and effective role in developing the minds and the attitudes of the Malays in the fields of religion and literature. *Aqidah* (faith) had become the pillar of their intellectual life. This is evident from the work that they produced, much of which is still in the form of manuscripts. Every piece of writing, although not on religion, starts with the name of Allah, phrased in the "*basmalah*". Other than *aqidah*, *Jawi* manuscripts also played an important role in helping its followers to understand the teachings of Islam in various fields, for the purpose of obtaining the pleasure of Allah as well as success and happiness in this world and the hereafter. They also contribute, albeit indirectly, towards the development of literature, including language, culture and history. It is based on these important considerations that the West has become involved in the research on Islamic manuscripts and has brought and kept them in libraries in Europe. They had studied the manuscripts closely and carefully in order to further their understanding and facilitate their dealings with the Muslim societies that they ruled and, at the same time, to attract Muslim academicians in search of research resources on Islamic studies and knowledge to their country.

Printing of Books/*Jawi* Manuscript

The printing and publication of *Jawi* books/manuscript began at the end of the 19th century C.E. It was organized by the Turkish Uthmaniyah government with the help of the Malay scholars in Makkah. For this purpose, an organization called the "Rectification Board" was formed in 1884. The function of this board was to rectify mistakes and errors found in works that were to be printed. The first man entrusted with the responsibility of carrying out the task was Syeikh Ahmad bin Zainal Abidin al-Fatani.¹⁸ Most of the works that were printed were on Islam law written by Fatani scholars including Syeikh Daud al-Fatani.

These books were first printed in Istanbul, Egypt and Makkah, but they were later printed in Penang in the 20th century. The works that were printed were later known as "*KitabJawi*" (*Jawi* Books). These *Jawi* books attracted the attention of several local as well as foreign researchers, including G.E. Marrison (1947), Mohd Nor bin Ngah (1983), and V.Matheson, M.B. Hooker (1988), and MahayudinHjYahaya (1994).

Conclusion

The *Jawi* manuscripts in the Malay Archipelago are a big contribution and can be taken as a lesson and exemplar, not only from the point of view of religious education and character, but also linguistically, historically and literarily. It is recommended that all national and university libraries in this region add more *Jawi* manuscripts covering various areas of Islamic sciences to the collection. These manuscripts should be well preserved and conserved to guarantee their safety so that their quality would not be affected because today, many manuscripts have been damaged by worms. It is recommended that these manuscripts be catalogued and arranged according to their field by having a manuscript synopsis. The next steps are to validate, edit and then print the manuscripts for the benefit of the Muslim society in this region.

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Sultan Haji Hassan al-Bolkiah Islamic Exhibition Gallery out of which only 40 are categorized as Malay-Jawi manuscript while the rest are Arab and Persian manuscripts.

¹⁸Snouck Hurgronje, *Mekka in the Latter Part of the 19th century*, tr. J.H. Monahan, London 1931:287.

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