ON THE EDGE OF A TRADITION : PARATEXTS IN 19TH-CENTURY MALAY MANUSCRIPTS

Jan Van der Putten
University of Hamburg

Abstract

The big majority of studies of Malay manuscripts have been directed towards the text contained in the manuscripts, thereby hardly, if ever, touching on physical or codicological aspects of the text container. Although concise descriptions of physical aspects of the manuscripts may be found in text editions and catalogues of collections, and recently a start has been made to study paratextual characteristics of the text carriers, there has been little effort to come to a more comprehensive study about the physical, codicological or paratextual elements in Malay manuscripts.

This paper will look into different categories of paratexts and will argue that changes in the indigenous society of the Malay World to a certain extent are reflected in the inclusion of certain elements in notes and colophons found in the manuscripts of the 19th century, most particularly in statement of ownership and instructions for handling the manuscripts as found in some manuscript that were part of lending libraries in urban centres. The paper intends to show how manuscript became valuable objects for some individuals and how paratexts can be valuable sources to map and analyse changes in attitudes of readers towards the production and consumption of the texts contained in the manuscripts.

Introduction : The Project

In very general terms and based on physical remains preserved in the repositories, Malay Muslim manuscript produced in Malay-speaking areas that comprises (parts of) Peninsular and Maritime Southeast Asia span a period from the early 16th until the first half of the 20th century. The most obvious agents for changes in, or even demise of, a flourishing manuscript tradition in the closing decades of the 19th century were the encroachment of high colonialism, the advent of indigenous lithographic printing industries in a few urban centres, the establishment of Western education systems, and the publication of Malay-language periodicals. Muslim lithographic reproduction built directly on the manuscript tradition at hand, and adopted a standard form and layout of Islamic manuscripts for its printed products (Proudfoot 1996: 253).

The big majority of studies of Malay manuscripts have been directed towards the text contained in the manuscripts, thereby hardly, if ever, touching on physical or codicological aspects of the text container. Although concise descriptions of physical aspects of the manuscripts may be found in text editions and catalogues of collections, and recently a start has been made to study paratextual characteristics of the text carriers (e.g. Chambert Loir 2006, Braginsky 2002), there has been little effort to come to a more comprehensive study about the physical, codicological or paratextual elements in Malay manuscripts.

The research project ‘On the edge of a tradition’ that starts in April 2014, intends to explore paratextual elements found in a selection of Malay manuscripts from the 19th century. It
will mainly focus on a limited number of manuscripts that have been identified by scholars as produced for a local audience, as opposed to manuscripts copied and written for colonial officials. A number of local cultural entrepreneurs collected, copied and wrote the texts in these manuscripts to lend them to readers for money. The best known and researched collection, a collection established and managed in Jakarta in a family business from the mid-19th until the early 20th century (Chambert Loir 1984, 1991), will be used as starting point for this exploration, which is meant to look into the form of paratextual elements, such as colophons, marginal notes, illustrations and other elements, and what they disclose about the use, social surroundings and attitude towards manuscripts and texts during this period when printed texts became more readily available.

The research material will be expanded by including concurrent manuscripts from other, similar collections from urban centres, such as Palembang, Singapore and Riau. Special attention will be given to statements of ownership that may attest a change in attitude towards a manuscript from an anonymous product of tradition into a commercial object that was owned by an individual.

Although the thrust of this research will be on paratexts in colophons and marginal notes that provide indication towards the transmission and organization of knowledge, other paratextual elements for navigating the texts, such as rubrication, and elements that offer information about the interpretation of the text, such as glosses and textual comments, will not be discarded as these also may show changing attitudes towards manuscripts. This research into the physical features of the manuscripts rather than scrutinizing the main text contained in these manuscripts will enable a more thorough comparison with other manuscript traditions and is envisioned as the start of a more comprehensive investigation into the Malay tradition as a whole.

State of Affairs

The study of manuscripts from Maritime Southeast Asia to the present day has largely focused on the textual features of the tradition and in general has been limited to transcribing and collating texts in text editions. Little to no attention has been paid to the physical and paratextual elements of the manuscript traditions and, since secondary sources are typically void of information about Malay literary activities, we know little about the socio-historical context surrounding the production of manuscripts and their role within the rapidly changing indigenous society.

In studies about Malay manuscripts and literary practices the 19th century is generally considered as the period of transition between a ‘traditional literature’ or ‘classical Muslim tradition’ and the advent of a Western-based ‘modern’ literary tradition. Cyril Skinner dubbed this century ‘transitional’ as indigenous writers close to the colonial institutions (which Amin Sweeney appropriately labels ‘European courts’) applied new writing strategies to present their stories, such as the ubiquitously-praised ‘realism’ (Skinner 1978, cf. Braginsky 2004). Malaccaborn and Singapore-based Abdullah bin Abdul KadirMunshi has been earmarked as the most influential agent who almost single-handedly changed the face of Malay literary traditions and his works have attracted much scholarly attention. Inevitably a research into the changing
practices of Malay manuscript traditions in the 19th century should take into account results of the mechanical reproduction of texts in the form of lithographic printing industries established in urban centres.

There seems little doubt that the higher availability of printing presses to indigenous agents accelerated transformations in Malay literary production both in content and form during this last phase of a substantial manuscript production. Broadly speaking lithographic printing, introduced and developed by British missionaries in the Malay World in the first half of the 19th century, adopted and continued the form and layout of texts in the manuscript traditions, for instance by providing wide margins and interlinear spaces for notes, comments and glosses (cf. Laffan 2008). This format gradually disappeared when new typographic texts produced in Bombay, Cairo and Istanbul conquered the Southeast Asian market for religious texts in the beginning of the 20th century. Lithographic printing also induced a proliferation of the art and practice of writing because texts needed to be hand-written on stone or special transfer paper in order to be reproduced on the presses.

Apart from doctrinal Islamic texts, a large number of edifying entertainment texts was churned out by the lithographic print shops in the Muslim quarters of Singapore and a few other urban centres. The popularity of these texts was supported and boosted by a burgeoning entertainment industry, which besides American circuses, European opera companies, and Chinese acrobats and opera troupes, included Indian ‘vaudeville’ companies that made a stopover in one of the Southeast Asian cities. Most particularly, Indian Parsi theatre groups met with great success on their tours through South and Southeast Asia and soon local troupes were formed, plays translated and popular stories printed on local presses (Putten 2009).

These developments in 19th-century cultural practices in the Malay World may be considered as being induced by the advent of High Colonialism and an ongoing process of monetization of the society in Southeast Asia. Closely related to the expanding availability of texts through printing and increased importance of money in economic exchanges was the establishment of lending libraries, which were set up by certain individuals who rented out manuscripts, and possibly also lithographed books, from their collections to the public for a certain fee. The biggest and best known lending library was managed by members of the Fadli family in Batavia (present-day Jakarta) in the second half of the 19th century. Among the family members Muhammad Bakir was the most active in accumulating, copying and composing texts to be rented out to the public. This ‘Fadli’ collection consisting of at least 75 texts was sold in instalments to the Bataviaasch Genootschap (Batavian Society for Arts and Sciences) and a few individuals (for details see Chambert-Loir 2013). At present 43 texts preserved in the National Library of Indonesia in Jakarta, Leiden University Library and Institute of Oriental Manuscripts in St. Petersburg have been identified as once part of this lending library collection.

In a series of publications Henri Chambert-Loir has discussed this collection in general and some of the manuscripts in great detail (see Chambert-Loir 1984, 1987, 1991, 2009 and 2013), while a few texts in this collection also have attracted the attention of other scholars (e.g. Koster 1997, Wieringa 1998, Braginsky 2002). The institution of manuscript-lending individuals has also been detected and discussed by some other scholars, such as Teukulskander (1981), Ulrich Kratz (1977), and Ian Proudfoot (1982). In some manuscripts collected by Klinkert in
Riau we can also find preambles, colophons and notes, that indicate the existence of a manuscript lending facility in Riau in the 1860s (Putten 2001: 225-227). These statements and manuscripts also take a prominent part in two more comprehensive studies about colophons in Malay manuscripts, which form a rich and very useful basis for the present research. Chambert-Loir (2006) based a general overview of colophons in Malay manuscripts on data he collected from catalogues, while Braginsky (2002) discussed some of the topoi concerning the reasons scribes mentioned for copying manuscripts and the audience of the recitations in manuscripts he studied in detail.

The primary and secondary sources indicate paratextual elements that suggest changes in attitude towards the manuscript becoming a valuable object whose possession may help the owner make a living. A very conspicuous indication of this is the frequent inclusion of the owner’s signature on the pages and instructions to the borrowers about the care they should observe and often the price they should pay for the manuscripts. These instructions are most often found in a colophon written in verse by the copyist or new owner found at the end of a text, while notes about ownership or the transfer of ownership of a manuscript to a member of the family may be found in a preamble or as a part of the rhymed colophon. Chambert-Loir has extensively discussed the inclusion and development of Muhammad Bakir’s signature and I refer to his introduction to the recent catalogue of the Fadli collection from Pecenongan for further details on this. In his articles Chambert-Loir also mentions the rhymed colophons and some illustrations found in this collection. In the following I will elaborate a little about these paratextual elements found in other Malay manuscripts predominantly originating from 19th-century Batavia.

**Statements of Ownership**

A telling example of statements of ownership is found in two manuscripts produced in the same neighbourhood of Batavia where the Fadli family also ran their manuscript rental business (Pecenongan). The manuscripts containing the popular Islamic legends Hikayat Amir Hamzah/Hikayat Raja Khandak (Cod. Or. 3308, Wieringa 2007: 218-23) and Hikayat Si Miskin (Ibid. 244-49) were copied by a certain Utung bin Akir who mentioned his name in a note telling that in case of his death the ownership would be conferred to his wife Syima or Karsyima followed by his signature in Cod. Or 3308 dated 1848. The rhymed colophon of this manuscript may be an indication that the manuscript changed ownership and was borrowed by others. The colophon seems to have been added later as it is of a different design and different hand (see below). The first pages of the manuscript are nicely illuminated in different colours indicating the value attached to this manuscript by the owner and scribe (see fig. 1). The first two pages of the other manuscript in his possession, Cod. Or. 3319, was also illuminated and on the last page contains his signature and the impression of a seal simply stating his name: Utung. This latter manuscript also contains a more elaborate statement of ownership and what to do with the manuscript after his death:

 Bahwa ini Hikayat Si Miskin jikalau tuan-tuan dan babah-babah dan enci’ maka adalah sahaya berpesan jangan jadi gusyar serta marah dangan syaini jikalau dipinjam jangan ada cala’nya. Sahdan ini hikayat Utung bin Akir dalam kamung Gang Pecenongan. [f. 115v]
 Bahwa sembah salam ta’zim sahaya Utung bin Akir yang duduk di dalam kampung Gang
Rummaging through Wieringa's wonderful catalogue of the Van der Tuuk collection in Leiden yields about 24 manuscripts that can be traced to Batavia where they were once part of a collection rented out to individuals to read by themselves or out loud to an audience. Of course, statements of ownership and signatures contain invaluable information about the manuscript economy of Batavia in the 19th century. One very interesting example is Cod. Or. 3243 which presents a version of Hikayat Asmara Dewa (Wieringa 2007: 104-7). The pages are divided into two columns of which one is for the text in Jawi and the other Wieringa surmises was meant for the Rumi transliteration possibly for a European student wanting to learn the script and language. The text was copied by an anonymous scribe who left the imprint of an oval red ink seal in this manuscript and also Cod. Or. 3242, possibly as sign of ownership. The manuscript contains a number of statements indicating that the manuscript changed hands and somehow came in the collection of a certain Musa who rented it out:

![Fig. 1: First page of Hikayat Amir Hamzah (Cod. Or. 3308, Wieringa 2007: 221)](image1)

![Fig. 2: colophon of Hikayat Si Miskin (Cod. Or. 3319, Wieringa 2007: 247)](image2)

Bahwa ini surat Hikayat Asmara Dewa yang empunya bernama Enci’ Musa [Jairan] di dalam daerah Kampung Gang Pecenongan; saya ada berpesan kepada sekalai tuan-tuan atau baba-baba atau nona yang mana suka membaca ini hikayat mesti bayar 10 sepulsen yang satu hari satu malam jangan sampai kena noda dan lagi saya berpesan jikalau abis dibaca mesti pulangin sama saya sendiri jangan sampai dikasi sama orang yang lain akan adanya (quoted from Wieringa 2007:105)
Apparently, the name Musa was deleted and replaced with the name Jairan in pencil, while also other names are mentioned in the manuscript, such as a note in Latin script mentioning a certain IntjikBowee: Bahoea Iniehikajatijang Aampoena Intji Boweediroemaobad ToeanGöring & Co sekarangijang Ampoenjaradipuradah Kakandah Moessah (ibid.). The roemaobat most probably refers to the UtrechtseApotheek, F. Göring & Co in Noordwijk (Batavia) that changed its manager in 1877 (Java Bode, 18 July 1877) but was an established pharmacy in Batavia since the 1856 until the late 1870s.1

Occasionally one also finds notes mentioned in the catalogues from the people who rented the manuscript, such as in one of the early Fadli manuscripts from the 1860s. Cod. Or. 3244, a copy of Hikayat Angkawijaya, contains several notes from renters, one of which runs:


The price a manuscript would cost per day is often indicated in the Fadli manuscripts and seems quite standard and stable over time, set at 10 cents per day, although there are also notes indicating a price increase (cf. Cod. Or. 3241 a copy of Hikayat Maharaja GandaParwaKusuma by Sapirin in which 5 duit and 15 rupiah perak were replaced with 15 duit and 55 rupiah perak for the rental per day and price to purchase the manuscript; see Wieringa 2007: 100). A structural comparison of these and other notes, which is part of the research project, will provide us with basic data to map out the manuscript economy of Batavia and changes taking place in the network of scribes, owners and readers.

Illustrations

The statements of ownership and its transfer to someone else is to be distinguished from the traditional phrase ‘yang empunyaceretera’ or ‘sahibulhikayat’, even though the difference may not always be that straightforward in the manuscripts. The distinction between ownership of the text and ownership of the manuscript came with the introduction of copyright registration in the 1870s in connection with the development of the indigenous printing industry and the piracy of texts executed by publishers (Proudfoot xx). The printing industry also seems to have (re-)introduced the inclusion of illustrations in the form of images depicting certain key scenes of the story within the texts as well as on the covers of published books (Putten 2009). It is telling that quite a number of commercially produced manuscripts contain images illustrating scenes of the predominantly popular texts as Malay manuscript tradition in general lacks illustrations. This change suggests a development in the consumption of these texts from aural by way of listening to a recitation to a more visual by reading the text in silence and provides further indication of an ongoing commodification of texts in this period. In broad terms there is a distinction between Malay manuscripts with canonic religious texts which were the ones often embellished with

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1 The firm was established by the German-Dutch botanist and chemist Philip Friedrich Wilhelm Göring who worked as a pharmaceutical chemist in Batavia (1844-1856) and in 1856 established the firm with Adolph Bierwith (Java Bode 14 May 1856).
specific forms of decoration, while manuscripts presenting other texts were without illustrations, and copied in a simple non-calligraphic hand.

For the manuscripts discussed here I propose to discern three different types of decorations and illustrations: there is the illumination of religious manuscripts done in a very fine manner in bright colours, such as one often finds in manuscript copies of the Qur’an (see Gallopxx), there is decoration that is added to enhance aesthetic aspects of the manuscript which may be on the cover or in the margins of the manuscript but bears little to no connection with its textual contents, but not as exquisite as illumination or as indication of the genre of manuscript or text (such as with the Qur’an). The third type of embellishment is illustrating the manuscript with a clear and direct relation to the content of the text, which can be in a space or frame reserved for it or within the lines themselves, both ways suggesting an intent to make a visually attractive manuscript beforehand. A further division in this very preliminary categorization of illustrations is one which helps to navigate a text and the other more to give a graphic representation of a scene in the text. Below I will give examples of these different types of decorations focusing on the latter category of illustrations with direct relationship to the textual content of the manuscript. These illustrations are found in the catalogues of the Fadli collection (Chambert-Loir and Dewaki 2009) and the Van der Tuuk collection (Wieringa 2007).

3b : Illustrations with clear connection to the text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fig. 3: Cod. Or. 3244, Hikayat Angkawijaya, p. 208 copied by Sapirin in the 1860s. It shows Semar embracing Raden Angkawijaya; the illustration totally encircled by writing but not really clear if the illustration was drawn first</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 4: ML 178, Hikayat Purasara, p. 60 copied by Muhd Bakir, undated. It shows the main character with his wife in a frame separate from the text.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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3a. Illustrations that seem to have been inserted while writing, may be quite small and may serve as a means to navigate the text; these can be figurative representing humans or objects or abstract, quite often in the form of calligraphic embellishments of words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fig. 5: ML 261, <em>Hikayat Merpati Mas</em> (HMM), copied by Muhd Bakir, 1887. Illustration of scenery and a peacock within the text, possibly by the copyist with the same pen (Chambert-Loir 2009).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 6: HMM, copied by Muhd Bakir, 1887. Illustration of a house, teapot and a dagger, possibly by the copyist with the same pen (Chambert-Loir 2009).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 7: ML 261, HMM, copied by Muhd Bakir, 1890. Embellishment of some of the letters (Chambert-Loir 2009).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 8: ML 261, HMM, copied by Muhd Bakir, 1890. Embellishment of the word arakian (Chambert-Loir 2009).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figs 7 and 8 would probably qualify under the heading of rubrication, the handwritten titles and headings that help navigate the text. It is quite common in Islamic manuscripts to find so-called interpunction words (arakian, syahdan, sebermula etc.) written in red ink, and in bolder and often bigger letters. Sometimes these words are quite elaborately embellished, especially the knotted ta marbutha at the end of certain words can be quite extravagant and exquisite. However, decorating such words with drawings of certain objects seems to be an innovation introduced by some of the copyists.
Fig. 9: Cod. Or. 3237, Hikayat Panji Semirang and Syair Mimpi, copied by Danial Abdul Taef on the behest of Encik Rabi’a, 1866. The words al-kissah and maka are restyled with smoke coming out of end-h of al-kissah to represent a locomotive (Wieringa 2007: 91).

Fig. 10: ML 183E, part of Hikayat Sultan Taburat, copied by Muhd Bakir, 1886. There are quite a few Christian angels tipped in between the text, which may be small stickers sold in Dutch stationary shops for young girls’ poetry albums.

Fig. 10 gives an example of another source for the embellishment of manuscripts: images from European sources, which may be clipped from magazines or readymade as seems to be the case in this manuscript copied by Muhammad Bakir. The other manuscript contains another example of figuratively embellished words from a source other than the Fadli collection. This copy of the PanjiSemirang was also intended for the rental market as is attested in some notes and contains admonitions to the readers (tuan-tuan, baba-baba, danteman-teman yang suka membaca). It also ends in a syair which maybe intended as a new text to entertain the reader or perhaps also becoming standard practice for copyist in this rental business to end manuscripts with a syair, which will be discussed in the following section.

Instructions for Readers

In Cod. Or. 3308 owned and copied by Utung the colophon states that the borrower should take good care of the manuscript as paper was expensive, not to read it in the presence of children as one would not be able to give proper attention to the text and not to read it close to an oil lamp as the dripping oil would stain the manuscript. These rhymed admonitions were written in a different hand and inserted in the colophon clearly separated from the main text of the manuscript in an embellished frame, which suggests that the new owner capitalized on the commercial value of the manuscript (see Wieringa 2007: 218-223). This type of instructions about the handling of the property can be found in many of the manuscripts from lending facilities (Chambert-Loir 1984, 1987, 1991, and 2009; Iskander 1981; Kratz 1977) and even in some lithographed texts we may find details about the price of manuscript rental and, more often, concerns about the rights the producer may claim over the reproduced text (Proudfoot 1982, 1986, Putten 1997: 731). Conspicuously, these statements are quite often added by the copyist in the form of a syair or rhymed colophon, which may be another of the innovations of the manuscript production in the second half of the 19th century.
Common knowledge has it that syair were supposed to be sung to an audience and that written syair in manuscript were more or less an aide memoire for the performers. The rhymed form of the narrative could then be considered a mnemonic device to facilitate the construction of the story in performance. Such a very general opinion does not do justice to the wide array of different syairs and the changes that took place during the last phase of substantial manuscript production. Syairs became the most popular material for the indigenous printing industry in Singapore, but is underrepresented in the Fadli collection which predominantly reserved the form for ‘syairsimbolik’ (Chambert-Loir 2013:25-27). Syair appeared in newspapers and other ‘modern’ media as short ‘poetic’ vignettes, and in the manuscripts produced for rental purposes syair seem to be added for admonition and other purposes. Clearly this paper does not have the scope to discuss this topic in more detail, but it will be topic of a broader research into the features and production of manuscripts in the long 19th century in order to better understand and position rhymed colophons such as the following of Cod. Or. 3308:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Al-kissah suatu cerita</th>
<th>Terlalu sangat menaru cinta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dengan patolong dewa dewata</td>
<td>Kertas dan dakwat berkata-kata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bukan sahaya mengata tidak</td>
<td>Kertas bukan bole meminta’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membacanya jangan dekat budak</td>
<td>Habar yang panjang menjadi pandak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bukan mengumpat bukan mengata</td>
<td>Membaca jangan dekat pelita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jikalau titik minyak pelita</td>
<td>Menjadi hina pandangan mata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kertasnya mahal bukan sebarang</td>
<td>Sebab aturan zaman sekarang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jikalau hikayat dipinjam orang</td>
<td>Hikayat jangan buat sebarang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esu(?) si nona muda kersumah</td>
<td>Minjam hikayat jangan lamah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empat harigayu(?) kelima</td>
<td>Pulangkan hikayat pada yang punya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siapakah sukamembaca hikayat ini</td>
<td>Amparkan tikar dengan perdani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hadirkan manggah dan kuini</td>
<td>Biar membaca sangan berani</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fig. 11; Cod. Or. 3308: Hikayat Amir Hamzah, copied by Utung 1848. The syair with admonitions to the reader styled as a title page of an Islamic manuscript or publication with headings referring to Allah (YaGhafur al-Rahim). The admonitions are similar to the ones we find in manuscripts of the Fadlicollection which was compiled ‘next door’ in Gang Pecenongan (Wieringa 2007: 221).

The statements of ownership, the presence of illustrations and also the inclusion of ‘advertisements’ conveying the titles of other texts available in the collection, a characteristic well known from print culture (Chambert Loir 1991), all suggest a change in the attitude of the indigenous people towards manuscripts from being a product of an anonymous tradition towards an object that is privately owned and can be commercially attractive. There seems to be a two-pronged development in the manuscript culture of the 19th century: the first is in the ownership of the manuscripts which seems to have become more prominent and was stated as being in the hands of named individuals. The second is in the consumption of the texts in the manuscripts which seems to have become a more private affair compared to the communal listening to the recitation of texts in a predominantly oral oriented society (cf. Proudfoot 2002). This paper intended to list a few topics of interest that will be part of the research to find out how paratext in the form of colophons, statements by the author, owner or copyists and also readers display such developments and the mentioned changes in attitude of indigenous people towards manuscripts in the second half of the 19th century. This research will build on the very few studies that have been made about colophons in Malay manuscripts and my own work in this field. It envisions to explore the blank spots in the study of the production and consumption of the hand-written texts during this period of severe competition with printed books.
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