Contents

Note on Transliteration vii
Preface ix
Acknowledgements xi
I. Introduction 1
1. Previous accounts of some of the oldest Malay manuscripts 1
2. Description of the manuscript 5
3. History of the manuscript 6
4. Origin of the manuscript 15
5. Some remarks on the Arabic text of the 'Aqā'id 38
6. Peculiarities in the text of the Malay translation 44
7. A summary of the philosophical aspects of the 'Aqā'id 47
II. The Malay text of the 'Aqā'id 53
III. Translation of the Malay text 65
IV. Arabic words in the Malay translation of the 'Aqā'id 77
V. List of Arabic words in the Malay translation of the 'Aqā'id 84
VI. List of technical terms in the Malay translation of the 'Aqā'id 87
VII. Facsimile of the manuscript: the text of the 'Aqā'id 97
VIII. Appendix: The Malay translation of an unfinished tract 149
1. The Malay text 153
2. Translation of the Malay text 155
I Introduction

1. Previous accounts of some of the oldest Malay manuscripts.

The oldest known Malay text is the one inscribed on granite known as the Trengganu Inscription dated Friday, the 22nd February 1303.¹ Some of the oldest Malay manuscripts considered to be extant are the ones kept in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, the University Library at Cambridge, the British Museum, and the University Library at Leiden. Accounts of these manuscripts have been given by Ph. S. van Ronkel in 1896,² and by W.G. Shellabear in 1898.³

According to Shellabear, the manuscripts at the Bodleian Library are considered to be the oldest Malay manuscripts now extant. These are: (1), a copy of the letter of the Sultan of Acheh to Queen Elizabeth the First of England dated 1011 A.H./1602 A.C.⁴ Shellabear presumes that the copy was written by a European. The original letter is probably preserved, it is said, in one of the Archives in London which keeps records and papers of the East India Company; (2), the original letter bearing the stamp of Sultan 'Alā' al-Dīn Shāh of Acheh giving authority for trading purposes to Captain (Sir) Henry Middleton⁵ who went

¹The correct reading of the text and the fixing of the right date have been established by me in 1970. See my The correct date of the Trengganu Inscription, Muzium Negara, Kuala Lumpur, 1970.
⁴JSBRAS, 31, pp. 113-117 (A). The date is in the Arabic text on the last line of p. 113 verso.
⁵Ibid., pp. 121-122 (B).
out with Sir James Lancaster in 1601. The letter is not dated, but is affirmed to be of the same date as (1) above; (3), the letter from the Sultan of Acheh to King James the First of England. This is an original letter and it is dated 1024 A.H./1612 A.C. Finally there is the book *Hikayat Seri Rama,* whose text is not dated. This manuscript was acquired by Archbishop Laud in 1633 as stated at the bottom of the first page of the text.

We see from the information given above, based on Shellabear's article cited, that the earliest known Malay manuscript texts are all dated from the beginning of the 17th century, and that the text of the *Hikayat Seri Rama* is believed to be of the same period.

According to van Ronkel, almost all the manuscripts that were once the property of the Dutch scholar Thomas Erpenius are preserved in the Cambridge University Library. Among them are six Malay manuscripts. Three of them originally belonged to a Dutch merchant, Pieter Willemsz. Floris van Elbinck who, according to him, stayed in Acheh in 1604. Van Elbinck was formerly employed by the Dutch Company, and later joined the English Company; and as an enterprising merchant and a good ambassador, he carried out a profitable trade for them with the Indies and other lands of the East. His last successful voyage with the English Company was in 1611. Two months after his return to England in 1615, he died in London. It was he, in the opinion of van Ronkel, who bought or wrote manuscripts for Erpenius. After Erpenius' death in 1624, the manuscripts among others belonging to him were offered to the University of Leiden, but due to some difficulties in raising the money for them—and when

---

8 See JSBRAS no. 70, April 1917, Singapore, pp. 181–207; the text of the *Hikayat Seri Rama* was published by the Methodist Publishing House, Singapore, 1915, pp. 1–128.
9 The other Malay manuscripts treated by him are some of those preserved in the University of Leiden Library and in the British Museum. All these date from the first half of the 17th century and from 1669–1680.
the money was finally raised, the complications that ensued in the negotiations between the University Board and Erpenius’ widow—the manuscripts in the end did not pass into the possession of the University of Leiden. They were finally sold in Antwerp to the Duke of Buckingham, who intended to present them as a gift to the University of Cambridge. When the Duke was assassinated in 1628, his widow carried out his intentions (1632). That in brief was how, according to E.G. Browne, the manuscripts of Erpenius found their way to Cambridge. A description of the six Malay manuscripts is given in detail by van Ronkel, who came to know of them from his teacher M.J. De Goeje, who in turn was told of their existence by Browne at Geneva in 1894. These manuscripts, with the exception of the ones written by van Elbinck dated June the 1st, 1604 at Aceh and October the 1st, 1604, are all undated. Van Ronkel himself thinks that they all date from the beginning of the 17th century. One of these manuscripts, numbered Ll. 6.25, is described by van Ronkel as containing four parts, I and II being an Arabic text with a Malay interlinear translation of the Burdah of Sharaf al-Dīn Muhammad ibn Sa’d al-Būṣīrī (d. c. 1296), and a fragment of the Arabic poem, with interlinear Malay translation, by Sirāj al-Dīn ‘Alī ibn ‘Uthmān al-Ūshī (d.?) called the Qasīdah al-Lāmiyyah fi al-Tawḥīd, also known as Bad‘ al-Amāli (composed about 1173). In 1955, G.W.J. Drewes published the text of the

---

10 BKI (46), 1896, pp. 1, 2. 3; 5.
11 See his “Description of an old Persian commentary on the Kur’ān” in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, July 1894, p. 417 fol. Cited by van Ronkel, op. cit., p. 5. A few of the manuscripts of Erpenius are at the Bodleian Library at Oxford, two are in the University Library at Leiden, but for the most part they are at Cambridge.
12 Van Ronkel, op. cit., p. 8, Gg. 6.40, IV, II & V.
13 Ibid., p. 7, Dd. 5-37.
14 Ibid., p. 6.
15 Ibid., p. 10.
16 See C. Brockelmann, Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur (GAL), 2v., and Supplementbanden (S), 3v., Leiden, Brill, 1943, GAL I, 264; SI, 467.
17 GAL I, 429; SI, 764.
Malay translation of the *Burdah* of al-Būṣīrī and his translation in Dutch of the Malay text, together with the Malay translation of the fragment of al-Ūshi’s *Badr al-Amālī* and his translation of it in Dutch in the Appendix to his work.\(^{18}\) In the opinion of Drewes the text is of late 16th century origin. Although Drewes’ claim that the Malay translation of the *Burdah* of al-Būṣīrī is of late 16th century origin, he is unable to make a positive statement about the exact date since the manuscript itself is undated. His argument for a late 16th century origin of the Malay translation, which might not necessarily apply to the Malay text of the manuscript in which the translation is written, is based solely upon circumstantial evidence about which we know that we can also apply to many other old works in Malay literature. All that he could say—and this, too, without the certainty that comes from positive knowledge—is that the termination point for the period in which the translation was made was about the year 1600.\(^{19}\) In other words, even if we concede that the translation was made sometime between 1591 and 1599, Drewes would have to accept that concession as he cannot prove by the arguments he has set forth that the translation *must* be of an earlier date than the ones suggested.

As far as I know, then, there is no 16th century dated Malay text in manuscript form that has ever been discovered and noticed. The text here presented, it will be shown, is the only one that has a date earlier than any of the Malay manuscripts so far considered by scholars to be among the oldest, which makes it the

---

\(^{18}\) *Een 16de Eeuwse Maleise Vertaling van de Burda van al-Būṣīrī (Arabisch Lofdicht op Mohammad)*, VKI (18), 1955. In this work Drewes has given a full explanation on the history of the manuscript; on the question of the oldest Malay Muslim writings; the importance of the *Burdah* in Malay translation; the role of the *Burdah*, its popularity and its criticism; an abstract of the contents of the poem; the manuscript and its spelling and morphology; the Arabic words in the Malay text; the Malay text and translation; a list of important words; a list of Arabic words in the Malay text; and an Appendix on the fragment of the poem by al-Ūshi, its Malay translation, and a translation of the Malay text.

oldest Malay manuscript text now extant. This momentous discovery is undoubtedly of great significance for the study of Malay language and literature as well as for the study of the religious and intellectual history of the Malays, seeing that it deals, not with legends nor with mundane affairs of state, but with the fundamental beliefs and faith of the Muslims based upon the essentials of the religion of Islam.

2. Description of the manuscript.

The entire book, the spine and front and back covers, is bound in light yellow parchment and the leaves gilt-edged. Each of the front and back covers is bordered near the edge on all four sides by a thin gilt line engraved into the parchment forming a rectangular outline of the little book. Each corner of the rectangles thus formed is ornamented with a little fleuron in gilt; and in the centre of the rectangle is engraved a small gilt laurel wreath of oval shape. There is no doubt that this decorative and protective binding was of European make and was probably done in the second half of the 17th century soon after the original owner acquired the manuscript. As far as I can discern the paper has no watermark and is probably of Eastern make. It has yellowed and the black ink of the text has shadowed forth from each page onto the next. Despite this, the Arabic and Malay texts are very clear. Considering its great age, the manuscript has been well preserved and is in remarkably excellent condition.

The format is $15\frac{1}{2}$ cm $\times$ $20\frac{1}{2}$ cm. There are 2 blank leaves following which, on the verso page, is what I call the flyleaf. Overleaf on the recto page is the beginning of al-Nasafi’s ‘Aqī‘id. The pages of the manuscript are unnumbered. Counting from the beginning of the Arabic text, al-Nasafi’s work occupies 43 pages. Page 44 verso is what I call the page following the colophon. In it and on the top half of the page in 3 lines are written the names of the Ten Companions who have been promised Paradise, presumably as a note to what is written on the last 2 lines of page 38. They were definitely written by the same hand that wrote the main text. The original owner has
transcribed the ten names in Latin. On the bottom half of the page he has written two notations in Latin in connection with the dating of the main text. Pages 45 to 49 contain the text of an unfinished tract, in Arabic with interlinear Malay translation, on the meaning of religion (dīn); the nature of knowledge or cognition (ma'rifah); unification (tawḥīd); faith (īmān); and submission (islām). This was written by a different but more flamboyant hand during the same period. Page 50 is blank; and page 51 has 3 words denoting Sūfī meanings unrelated to our subject. The remainder of the manuscript consists of 4 blank leaves.

The space taken by the Arabic text of al-Nasafi's 'Aqā'id is 10 cm × 14 cm on each page centrally placed and containing 5 lines to a page. The spacing between each line is 2½ cm in which the Malay translation is written. The Arabic text, with full diacritical symbols, is in bold naskh script while the Malay text, in similar script, is quite plain and much smaller.

3. History of the manuscript.

The flyleaf bears the handwriting in Latin of the original owner of the book, giving the name of its author, a brief description and date of completion of writing the work, and his own name. It reads:


i.e.:

'Umar Abū Ḥafṣ, son of Muḥammad, son of Aḥmad, Nasafi, (Tatar).
Arabic with interlinear translation in Malay.
Script dated the year 998 Hijrī—1590 Christian.
Collection of Andreas Müllerus Greiffenhagius.

The identity of the author and his work is easy enough. Abū Ḥafṣ
‘Umar Najm al-Dīn al-Nasafi (d. 537 A.H./1142 A.C.) was one of the greatest Sunni and Ḥanafi jurisconsult and theologian belonging to the school of al-Māturīdī (d. 333 A.H./944 A.C.) who wrote an abridgement of the creed of Islam known as the ‘Aqāʾid. Among his works the ‘Aqāʾid, which is the first statement in concise form and well-knit phrasing of the creed to appear among the Muslims, became popular and was much commented upon. Numerous editions of commentaries on it were written. The most famous commentary of the work is the one by Saʿd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī (d. 791 A.H./1387 A.C.) completed at Khwārizm in 768 A.H. (1364 A.C.). The great esteem accorded al-Nasafi by eminent Muslim savants and scholars, his renown throughout the Muslim world, was indeed largely due to the remarkable nature of the brief treatise that he composed and which was recognized as of paramount importance to the understanding of the articles of belief and faith in Islām. In the preface to his commentary, al-Taftāzānī describes the author of the ‘Aqāʾid and his brief treatise thus:

The brief treatise known as the “Articles of Belief” is by the painstaking Imām, ‘Umar al-Nasafi, the example of the learned of Islam and the star of our faith and religion. May Allah raise his rank in the abode of Peace. It includes under the headings of this branch of knowledge the most striking gems and pearls of great value which are the fundamental standards of our religion. Running through the text [of the creed] these [gems and pearls] are jewels and precious stones of certainty, yet at the same time the acme of conciseness and instruction and the last word in good order and arrangement.

20 GAL I, 427; SI, 758.
21 GAL II, 215; SII, 301.