

TRACING MALAY MANUSCRIPTS IN MECCA, SAUDI ARABIA : RECENT DEVELOPMENTS¹

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to explain on the two recent tracing activities for Malay manuscripts in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. The first tracing activity was undertaken in 2010² and the second in 2013. The focus of this paper is on the tracing effort undertaken in 2013.

Why the tracing activities were undertaken

Mecca has long been considered as an important centre of learning for Malay scholars. Perhaps Mecca could be considered as the most important centre of learning for Malay scholars in 19th century and earlier. Mecca has been the ultimate destination for Malay students and scholars in their travels in search of education. The students normally travel from one institution to another in Malay Archipelago in search of the centers of education that could offer comparatively higher levels of education than they had been before. In Mecca many Islamic scholars from all over the world gathered and involved themselves intensely in learning and subsequently teaching and writing kitabs, including Malay manuscripts. Surprisingly, up until 2010, to the best of our knowledge, there were no Malay kitabs/manuscripts could be found in Mecca. When GAPENA hosted a conference in Mecca about 20 years ago, one of the objectives was to trace and document Malay manuscripts available in Mecca. Although there were discussions on the matter but no manuscript was able to be traced in Mecca.

Apparently all Malay *ulama'* did spend their time in Mecca to further their education. Some of them stayed there for many years, initially as students but later as teachers, particularly to new students from the Malay Archipelago. Reknowned Malay *ulama'* of 16th-17th century such as Hamzah Fansuri, Shamsuddin al-Sumatrani, Nuruddin al-Raniri and Abdul Rauf Singkel and *ulama'* of the 18th-19th century such as Abdul Samad al-Falimbani, Daud Abdullah al-Fattani and Muhammad Arshad al-Banjari all spent part of their life in Mecca to further their studies. In fact, Abdul Samad al-Falimbani for example stayed in Mecca for 30 years and in Medina for 5 years. Therefore, it was not a surprise that many Malay manuscripts were written in Mecca. However, until 2010 there had been not a single Malay manuscript found in Mecca. In the past, travelling to Mecca had been a hazardous journey. Before steamship was introduced, Muslims from the Malay Archipelago had to travel by sailing ships which very much dependent on the weather to propel them to Mecca. The travel time could take a year. When steamship was introduced in the 16th century, the journey lasted for about three months. Abdullah Munshi in his

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² A more detailed paper on the first tracing activity was presented during the Simposium Internasional Pernaskahan Nusantara at Solo, Indonesia on 26-28 July 2010, and later published with some amendments in *Malaysia Dari Segi Sejarah (Malaysia in History)*, no. 39, 2011, a journal of Historical Society of Malaysia.

manuscript *Kisah Pelayaran Abdullah* mentioned that when he undertook the journey to Mecca in 1854, it took him three months to reach Jeddah from Malay Peninsula. Unfortunately he could not reach Mecca when he fell ill and died while in Jeddah. Along the journey, the pilgrims from the Malay Archipelago faced lots of hardship from the effects of weather, lack of food, unscrupulous middle men and even from the ship captains. The number of casualties along the journey was therefore quite high. Despite the difficulties many students from the Malay Archipelago continued to travel to Mecca in search of education.

Initial contact

In 2009, there were two students from Saudi Arabia in the Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS) Program at International Islamic University Malaysia. One of the students was from Jeddah and another from Mecca. Both of them also took two papers taught by the author, Management of Information Institutions (LISC 6070) and Management of Islamic Manuscript Collections (LISC 6191). The second paper partly covered on Malay-Islamic manuscripts. In the course of studies we often discussed on Malay community in Mecca, the Islamic and Malay tradition of writing and book making and the possible existence of Malay manuscripts in Mecca. The student from Mecca, Brother Saqar Moisan al-Otaibi later decided to write a project paper on the application of computers in the library of Umm al-Qura University, his alma mater. The library is officially known as *Maktabah al-Malik Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz*, Umm al-Qura University, Arafah Campus. In the course of our discussions, I requested for his favour if he could make enquiries as to whether the Library have Malay manuscripts. He promised to enquire about the matter. He also knew my intention to perform Umrah in Mecca in the next few months. Upon his return to IIUM, he informed me that according to his contacts at the Library there are *Malawiyyah makhtutat* (Malay manuscripts) in the Library although their numbers are unknown. He also informed his contact at the Library of my intention to visit the Library see in the next Umrah season. Prior to my departure, he also gave me the names of two librarians of the Library and their telephone numbers for my convenience. In fact, a day or two before my departure, he made a direct telephone call to his contact at the Library regarding my departure to Mecca.

First tracing effort

The author performed Umrah in March 14-23 2010 which started in Medina and ended in Mecca. During the latter part of the Umrah, the author took the opportunity to visit the Library one morning and met the librarian concerned who was also Head of Digital collections of the library. The librarian was very helpful. He not only gave me a book register that lists all manuscripts that have been digitized by his department but also the book register that lists all manuscripts in the library. From the two book registers and with the help of his subordinates, I was able to trace one number, *raqam* 5461, with the title *Bidayat makhtutat* and a note in the adjoining column stating *Malawiyyah makhtutat*, which means Malay manuscript. During the visit that lasted in two hours, I was able to trace only the manuscript inventory number. Fortunately, the manuscripts in *raqam* 5461 has already been digitized. Therefore, I was able to purchase it in CD format. After examining the text in *raqam* 5461 following my return to Malaysia and in consultation with officers in the Centre for Malay Manuscripts, National Library of Malaysia, we found that the inventory number *raqam* 5461 contained 3 Malay manuscripts.

The first 2 manuscripts were incomplete, in the form of fragments, and the last manuscript was a complete *bab* (chapter) of a kitab. The manuscripts are:

1. [Matters pertaining to Hajj], a 5 pages fragment of a kitab written by Sheikh Abdul Samad al-Falimbani was written because on the first page of the fragment the name of the author was mentioned as follows, “*Adapun kemudian daripada itu maka lagi akan berkata faqir yang berkehendak kepada Tuhannya yang amat kaya yaitu Abdul Samad Jawi Palembang khadam segala fuqara’ di dalam negeri Mekah yang Musyrifah*” Probably it was part of his *Kitab Hidayah al-Salikin fi Suluk Maslak al-Muttaqin*.
2. [Questions and answers relating to akhlaq], fragments in 2 pages, the title of his kitab has not yet able to be identified.
3. [Bab Kitab al-Bai’i], 166 pages, complete. Since the kitab started with the word *bab* rather than Islamic doxology (praises to Allah and Rasulullah), it should be part of another kitab.

Second tracing activity

The author performed the following Umrah from 8 to 19 April 2013, started with Medina and ended in Mecca. This trip was very much better organized than the first trip. About two weeks before the trip to Mecca, we discussed on our plan to trace Malay manuscripts at the Library and what we would do during the visit. Brother Saqar said he would be in Mecca then to wait for me. As soon after I arrived in Mecca I telephoned brother Saqar about my arrival. He picked me up from the hotel, and drove me to the Library. He was personally involved with the effort to trace Malay manuscripts in the Library because he could read Arabic and knew the staff at the Library. We examined the lists of manuscripts in both Register Books. During the trip, two additional inventory numbers were found to be Malay manuscripts in the Book Registers for Manuscripts. The two inventory numbers were *raqam* 297 with the given title in the Register Book as *al-arba’in al-Jawiyyah* and *raqam* 2964 with the given title as *Bi al- lughah al-Jawiyyah* or with Jawi language. I bought a copy of the manuscripts in CD format. Upon my return to Malaysia and with the cooperation of the officers from Centre for Malay Manuscripts, National Library of Malaysia I examined the content of the CD. The contents of the manuscripts were identified as follows:

1. *Raqam* 297 contains 3 kitabs :
 - a. *Hadith* 40 oleh Syeikh Nawawi, 32 pages, complete. On the first page the text a note in Arabic, “*syarah al-arba’in al-Nawawiyyah bi al-lughah al-Jawiyyah*”. On colophon the text ends with, “..... dan kepada yang empunya surat ini hubaya jangan tiada wabillah al-taufik tamat al-kalam bi alkhair wa Salam”.
 - b. *Risalah Kitab Nikah*. 16 pages, complete kitab. The Kitab started with *Bismillahirrahmanirrahim*. *Ini suatu risalah pada menyatakan perkara jima’ dengan isteri yang tersebut dalam kitab*” On colophon the text ends with, “segala hamba Allah yang perempuan memperangaikan seperti perangai perempuan ini supaya adalah beroleh bahagia dunia dan akhirat tamat al-kalam”
 - c. [*Kitab Nikah*], 12 pages, incomplete. On the first page the kitab started with *FASAL*. *Ini suatu fasal pada menyatakan perintah orang beristeri yang sempurna*

dan lagi mengikut kelakuan Nabi s.a.w.....” On colophon, the text ends with *“maka kita jabat perempuan kita dudukkan di atas kerusi serta kita baringkan seperti yang telah tersebut dahulu tamat al-kalam”* Since the text started with FASAL rather than Islamic doxology (praises to Allah and Rasulullah), therefore probably it was part of another kitab.

2. Raqam 2964 contains 2 kitabs :
 - a. *Kitab ‘Aqaid al-Iman*, 24 pages, complete. A text in translation format, the main text in Arabic with translation underneath in Jawi. The text starts with *“Bismillahirrahmanirrahim. Alhamdu li Llahu li Llahi wa ssalatu wa ssalam”* The text ends with *Walhamdu li Lllahi Rabbil ‘Alamin”*
 - b. *Sullam al-Mubtadi fi Bayan Tariq al-Muhtadi*, 91 pages, complete. The text starts with *“bismillahirrahmanirrahim.Wabihi nasta’inu. Dengan nama Allah Tuhan yang amat murah lagi amat mengasihani akan hambanya yang mu’min”*On colophon the text ends with *“telah sempurnalah maksud faqir daripada menterjemahkan risalah yang bernama Sullam al-Mubtadi fi Bayan”*

Conclusion

Mecca was the ultimate destination for students in Malay Archipelago to further their Islamic education in the past centuries. There were many Malay manuscripts written in Mecca by ulama’ from this region. However, by far there was not a single Malay manuscript could be found in Mecca itself. The success of tracing efforts undertaken in 2010 and 2013 in tracing Malay manuscripts in Mecca put to rest the curiosity on the matter. Apart from the manuscripts found in Umm al-Qura University Library, there could be other Malay manuscripts in Mecca, including in the Library of Umm al-Qura University Library itself. Ongoing efforts should be undertaken to track down the manuscripts and undertake research on the life of Ulama’ concerned whilst they were in Mecca.

PERPUSTAKAAN
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