

Marks of many hands: annotation in the Malay manuscript tradition and a Sufi compendium from west Sumatra.

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Abstract:

Annotation is a paratextual element of Malay manuscripts that has been little studied. This preliminary investigation draws on recently digitised material to survey the varieties of annotation in both literary and *kitab* manuscripts, highlighting the significant differences between the two manuscript corpora. The main categories of annotation in literary manuscripts include ownership marks, doodling and *probatio pennae*, warnings about the contents of the texts, pictorial annotation, and, rarest of all, readers' responses to the text. However, annotation is found in far greater quantities in *kitab* manuscripts, suggesting that the *surau* or similar religious establishment was the more definitively literate milieu—in spite of the central importance of oral instruction and of personal relationships between teacher and student. Annotation in *kitab* manuscripts consists mainly of scholarly glosses, including cross-references to other works or authorities, and translation into Malay, along with notes taken down by a student while being instructed by a teacher, and occasional more personal comments. The article concludes with a case study of annotation in a *kitab* compendium from the collection of Surau Syekh Abdurrahman in Lima Puluh Kota, west Sumatra. Digitised as part of an Endangered Archives Programme project, the manuscript is heavily annotated in a number of hands. The earlier annotation, including scholarly references, translation glosses and 'lecture notes', is typical of *kitab* manuscripts and of Islamic manuscripts more generally. The most recent annotation, dating to the 1990s, reveals an apparent collapse in that pedagogic tradition, most likely related to the controversies of Minangkabau Sufism that occurred over the manuscript's life.

Key words:

Malay literary and *kitab* manuscripts, reading and annotation practices, Minangkabau *surau*.

A note left in a Malay manuscript, whether a warning to a borrower to return it on time or the sketched head of a *wayang* puppet, is the enigmatic trace of an earlier reader or copyist, promising to reveal something of how the book was understood and used in its original context—a context about which we still know so little. Studies of annotation are well established for European printed books (Jackson 2001) and are commonplace for European manuscripts (see Marvin 2014 and Ulrich 2014 for two studies of a single manuscript exemplar), but with the exception of Wieringa (2005) there has been no focused attention on this topic in Malay manuscript studies. Older catalogues of Malay

manuscripts only exceptionally mention the presence of annotation, usually when a note provides an indication of the identity of a previous owner. Newer catalogues, however, are more attentive to annotation, marginalia and other paratextual features, thereby opening up new lines of research into Malay manuscripts as physical objects rather than simply bearers of texts.¹ Just as significantly, the unprecedented availability of digital images of Malay manuscripts, via the British Library's digitisation project and the Endangered Archives Programme (EAP), brings thousands of manuscript pages to hand, facilitating the study of paratextual elements such as annotation. Making use of these developments and drawing on existing collections, this study is a preliminary attempt to investigate annotation practices in Malay manuscripts, and to suggest what may be learned by attending to them. This article examines two distinct Malay manuscript traditions: literary manuscripts, including poetry, historical chronicles, romances, didactic literature and the like, and *kitab* manuscripts, defined by Braginsky as "scholarly treatises on theology, Muslim law and Sufism" (2004: 273). As will become evident, each manuscript tradition displays distinct habits of annotation (or lack thereof). A case study of annotation in a particular *kitab* manuscript, a compendium of Islamic texts from a Minangkabau *surau* collection digitised through the EAP, suggests how annotation may shed light on a manuscript's history.

Annotation is here defined as marks made by hands other than that of the original copyist at the original time of copying. This includes writing, drawing, doodling and handwriting practice, and may be found anywhere in the manuscript. In his handbook of Arabic codicology, Gacek defines marginalia more narrowly as "the matter found outside of the body of the text proper (*matn, aṣl*), placed in any of the four margins. This includes glosses and scholia, notabilia (sideheads), marginal devices (such as palmettes, roundels and vignettes), and corrections of any kind, being part of a primitive critical apparatus" (2009: 156). As will become clear, Malay literary texts have hardly any marginalia at all, in this strict sense. They do, however, have ample amounts of annotation, usually in flyleaves and blank pages. Malay *kitab* texts, on the other hand, have copious amounts of marginalia answering to Gacek's description. With respect to another paratextual element—illumination—Gallop has observed that it is generally rather scarce in the Malay manuscript tradition, while the "finest examples of double decorated frames tend to be found in manuscripts of the Qur'an and other Islamic texts written in Arabic" (2013: 14). It appears that, in the case of annotation as with illumination, once again the *kitab* texts display the greater sophistication and complexity. *Kitab* annotation also attests to the Islamic educational establishment in South East Asia as a profoundly literate milieu, firmly rooted in the scribal and pedagogic practices of the wider Muslim world.

Why then consider annotation in *kitab* and literary texts together? Philologists and literary critics have tended to segregate *kitab* texts from Malay literary or historical works, entrusting *kitab*

¹ Particularly useful for the present study are Oman Fathurahman et al's *Katalog naskah Dayah Tanoh Abee Aceh Besar* (2010) and Annabel Gallop's addenda to Ricklefs and Voorhoeve's *Indonesian manuscripts in Great Britain* (2014), as well as her invaluable additional information provided for each digitised manuscript on the British Library Digitised Manuscripts site (accessible via <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/>).

instead to scholars of Islam. In some respects, this makes good sense: *kitab* works are quite distinct from literary works, not just in terms of genre and sometimes language, with Arabic ubiquitous in *kitab* works, but also in terms of the circles in which they were produced and used. In a very real way, the literary manuscript tradition, whether based in a royal court or an urban kampung, seems to have existed separately from the *kitab* manuscript tradition, based in a Minangkabau *surau*, Patani *pondok*, Acehne *dayah* or analogous institutions across island South East Asia. However, as Braginsky has argued (1993 and 2004) both *kitab* and literary texts can be conceived of as constituent parts of a single conceptual system, with the former thought of as belonging to a higher “sphere” than the latter. Or, in the words of William Marsden, reporting on Malay literary activities in southern Sumatra in the late eighteenth century, “Malay literature consists chiefly of transcripts and versions of the koran, commentaries on the mussulman law, and historic tales both in prose and verse, resembling in some respects our old romances” (1811: 346). Unusually for a European of his time, Marsden’s collection of manuscripts encompasses all these genres of texts, including a number of *kitab*. These two manuscript genres were constituent parts of a single literary world, existing at the same time and often in the same places, and perhaps involving the same people, whether as copyists, composers or readers.

The case study with which this article concludes is of a compendium of Islamic texts belonging to Surau Syekh Abdurrahman in Kabupaten Lima Puluh Kota, west Sumatra, selected for the abundance of annotation within its pages. This manuscript was digitised as part of a pilot project led by Irina Katkova for the EAP. In her catalogue description, Katkova calls the voluminous EAP 205/3/1 “the classical Malay Islamic compendium,” containing works on law (*fiqh*), Minangkabau *adat*, the Naqshbandi *tariqa* and others. Most significant for the present investigation is Katkova’s observation that the “manuscript is quite heavily annotated in a number of hands (including in Latin script), and with a variety of inks and pencils.”² The diversity of notes in EAP205/3/1 suggests changing scribal practices throughout the manuscript’s life. The contrast between the earlier (and far more numerous) Jawi marginalia, presumably made by *surau* students, and the late twentieth-century Rumi marginalia, made by one Abdul Jani of Batu Sangkar, can be read in conjunction with what we know about the decline of the Minangkabau *surau* to reflect in microcosm the profound upheavals in Minangkabau society.

Annotation in Malay literary manuscripts

Annotation in Malay literary manuscripts is rare, concurring with the now conventional understanding of Malay texts as primarily aural experiences (Sweeney 1987, Braginsky 2004: 22-6).

²See catalogue entry at http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_item.a4d?catId=56;r=19169

During a reading from a text, neither reader nor listeners would have had occasion to jot down private thoughts in the margins. Annotation would seem to be a hallmark of silent reading, a mark left by the individual's encounter with the text: precisely the kind of reading that is *not* postulated for the Malay manuscript tradition. Rather than an occasion for quietly communing with a book, recitation from a Malay manuscript may have been a far more social and indeed chaotic event. The eighteenth-century *Misa Melayu* describes the lavish festivities held during the all-night vigil for a royal princess' ear-piercing ceremony, including the playing of gongs and other musical instruments, the beating of *rebana* drums accompanied by singing, demonstrations of sparring with spears, dancing, bouts of cock-fighting, and, in the midst of all of this, reading from a *hikayat* (Raja Chulan 1968: 40-1). Here reading is definitely reading aloud, and is a kind of public performance. Of course, not all acts of reading were so cacophonous—one thinks, for instance, of the description in *Syair Buah-Buahan* of the characters gathered in a house to take turns reciting and listening to a *hikayat* (see Mulaika Hijjas 2011: 61-2). There is even occasional solitary (and perhaps silent) readers, such as the prince in *Hikayat Indraputra*, "sitting reading a *hikayat* in a pleasure garden" ("seorang anak raja duduk membaca hikayat pada tempat peranganan," Mulyadi 1983:108), though he is interrupted in short order by a matchmaking parrot.

In contrast, the only two examples of "reading to oneself" ("membaca seorang diri") turned up in a search on the Malay Concordance Project (MCP) were from *Syair Hemop* (i.e. Governor General Baron van Imhoff), which tells of the war between the Dutch and the Chinese in mid-eighteenth-century Batavia. In both cases, the person described as reading 'privately' is a European (Rusconi 1935: 33, 85). Clearly, this individual and perhaps silent mode of reading, particularly of a letter that would usually have been read aloud with appropriate pomp and circumstance, struck the composer of *Syair Hemop* as extraordinary. It contrasts starkly with the over seven hundred other instances of *membaca* found in classical prose and poetry on the MCP, occurring in formulations that make it clear that the text is read aloud (*membaca doa*, *membaca ciri*, *membaca khutbah*, *membaca surat di hadapan* and so on). If there is something remarkable and even untoward about the idea of silent reading here, how much more remarkable must have been the notion of private annotation? Is this why, among the numerous exhortations to readers contained in the colophons studied by Kratz (1977) and Braginsky (2002), in which the scribes warn readers against staining the manuscript with lamp oil or betel, leaning on it, rolling it up, and so on—there are no explicit instructions not to write in the books?

A cursory survey of the major catalogues of Malay manuscripts (Wieringa 1998, Iskandar 1999, Gallop, Ricklefs and Voorhoeve 2014) suggests that the most frequently found annotation is by Europeans. This is precisely what one would expect. Europeans reading Malay texts were products of a highly literate print culture in which annotation while reading was standard practice. Moreover, marginal notes such as glosses of unfamiliar words are also what one would anticipate from language learners or lexicographers. Marsden's note in the margins of a Malay text about Moses reveals something of his scholarly interests (SOAS MS 12188 f. 171v), while, as Gallop relates, Crawford's

exhausted “Finis! Thank god” in the margins of his copy of *Hikayat Dewa Mandu* tells its own tale.³ Eloquent though they are, this annotation obviously reveals nothing about responses of the text’s local readers. A further complicating factor in assessing the prevalence of annotation is that many of the Malay manuscripts now held in major institutional collections were clean copies made for Europeans (see Proudfoot 2002: 139 fn. 40). As such, by definition they do not show the marks of use that they might have acquired if they had remained in their own ecosystem. Nevertheless, there are enough examples of annotation in Malay literary manuscripts to group annotation practices into broad categories. These, ranged from approximately the most frequently encountered to the least, are: ownership marks, including transfer of ownership and notices about terms of rental; *probatio pennae* and doodling; warnings about the contents of the text; pictorial annotation; and a few (vanishingly rare) comments on the texts themselves.

Ownership marks have long been noted in catalogues, as they provide some of the scant available clues about a manuscript’s provenance. Particularly fulsome examples of this category of annotation, detailing successive owners, include *Hikayat Raja Babi*, with three generations of direct descendants recorded (BL Add MS 12393 f.105r, f.2r).⁴ It may be noted that while some of these ownership marks occur on the first flyleaf, which is where they might be expected, others are found rather randomly in the middle of the manuscript, suggesting a lack of a strong convention about where ownership marks should be placed. Gallop’s article in this issue discusses what are apparently ownership marks in a manuscript of *Hikayat Nabi Yusuf*, showing that it was originally owned by a Cik Candra but eventually belonged to one Muhammad Yusuf ibn Mir Hasan.⁵ The absence of concern about provenance among the nineteenth-century European collectors who formed the major European institutional collections of Malay manuscripts has been noted elsewhere (Hijjas 2010: 161). In contrast, manuscripts in the more recently formed Malaysian institutional collections apparently contain significant numbers of ownership marks (see Indeks Nama in *Katalog* 2000-2008, which includes names of owners as well as copyists and authors).

³ See blog post by Annabel Gallop at <http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/asian-and-african/2013/12/reading-malay-manuscripts-with-children.html>

⁴ http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_12393&index=0

⁵ http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=MSS_Malay_D_4&index=0

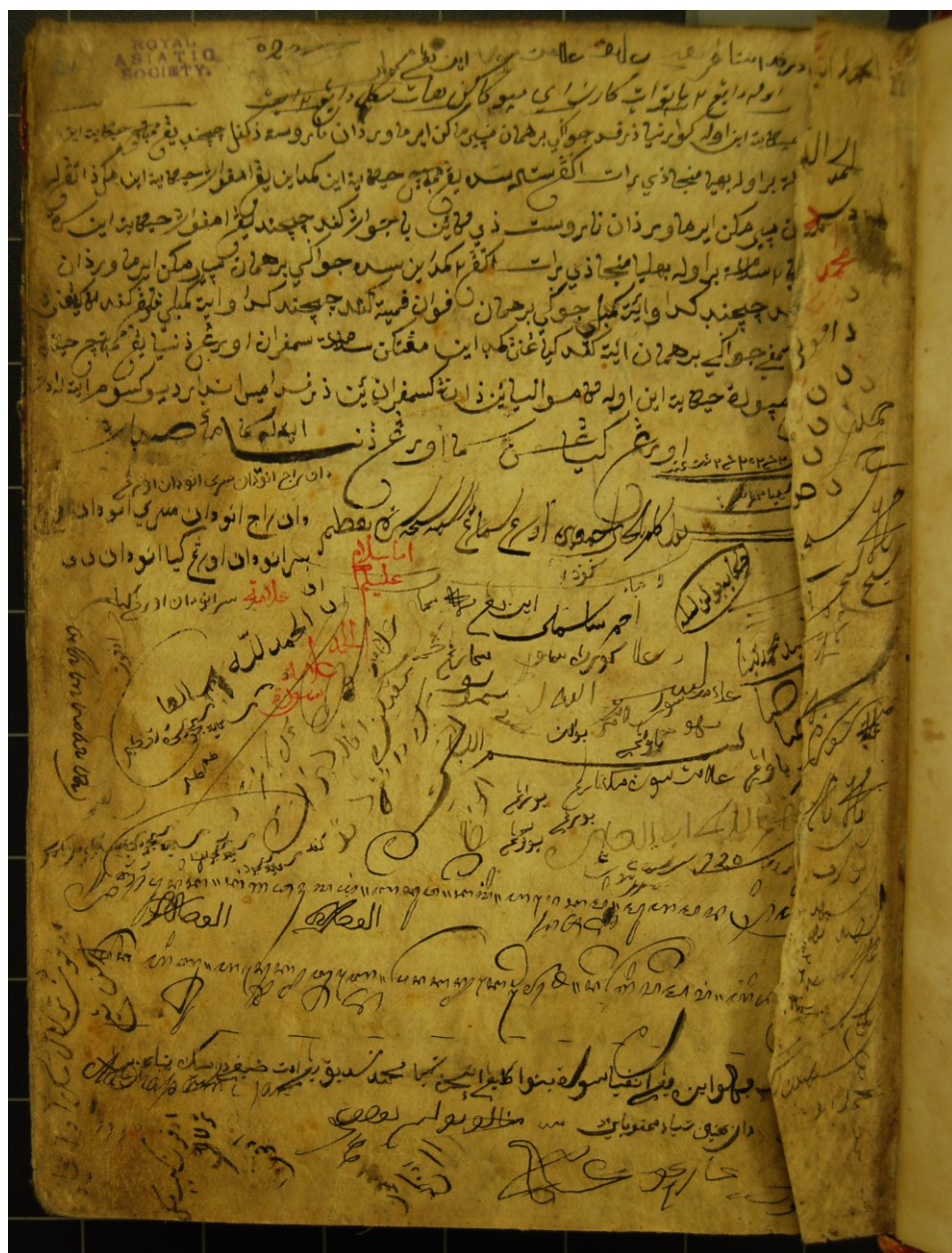


Fig. 1: Multilingual doodling in RAS Malay 47. Image courtesy of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland.

Handwriting practice and indeed random doodling can also often be found in flyleaves and blank pages. An example of this type of writing-in-texts is the unrestrained doodling, in Javanese and Malay, on the flyleaf of RAS Malay 47 (see Fig. 1). This type of annotation usually bears no relation to the contents of the manuscript. It seems rather that the blank pages invited random jottings and handwriting practice (see, for instance, the repeated letter *dal* on the torn remnant of the first page). An evocative instance of such annotation appears in the front flyleaf of *Hikayat Isma Yatim*: as well as the Roman letters A through Q and numbers one to ten, there is a homily in English (“Blame not hastily / Command yourself”) with between its two lines the declaration in Jawi: “Raja Ahmad yang menulis surat Inggeris ini adanya” (“Raja Ahmad penned this English writing,” BL MS Add 12379 f1r,

see Fig. 2).⁶ Here, the blank space before the tale begins is used to demonstrate an individual's unusual ability in Rumi script (and provides a useful corrective to the assumption that Rumi annotation is necessarily by a European). Wieringa (2005) discusses in detail examples of handwriting practice or *probatio pennae* in an eighteenth-century Batavian manuscript. This composite document, including a *syair* about the importance of learning to write, lists of everyday vocabulary and examples in the teacher's hand followed by student attempts, reveals "what could be called the primary-school system" (Wieringa 2005: 54). We will see that the annotation in the case study manuscript discussed here, EAP205/3/1, provides a similar window into a markedly higher level of education.

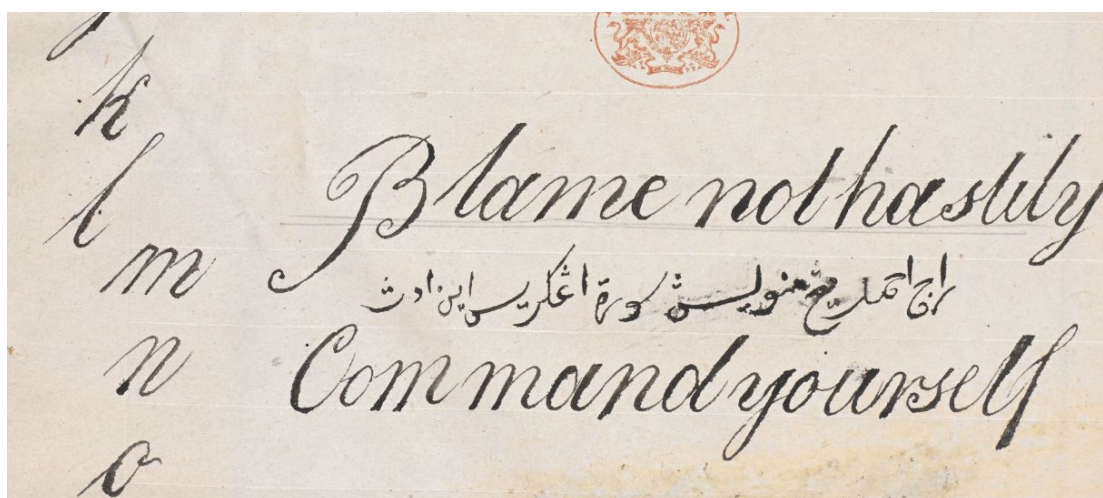


Fig. 2: Raja Ahmad's annotation in BL MS Add 12379. Image courtesy of the British Library Board.

A more surprising category of annotation in literary manuscripts is what might be called public service annotation. This type of annotation warns against the dangers a certain kind of literary text poses to the faith of the unwary reader. Two manuscripts in the British Library collection feature conscientious warnings to readers on virtually every page. On top of the first page of the Panji tale *Hikayat Cekel Waneng Pati* there is a warning to readers against believing in it as "it is all lies," "semata sekaliannya itu dusta belaka" (BL MSS Malay C2 f. 1 v.), with a similar warning to listeners on the facing page (f. 2 r.).⁷ These warnings are expanded upon on a nearby blank page: "never forget about Allah and His Prophet when reading this text. The words of this Javanese text are great lies, tricks played by the person who wrote it, an intelligent person but not of this time. These are deeds of long ago, so people nowadays are being fooled a little; that's the reason for this long explanation" ("jangan sekali-kali lupa akan Allah dan Rasulnya pada tatkala membaca surat ini perkataan surat Jawa ini terlalu amat dusta sekali oleh dicandakan orang yang menyurat yang bijaksana orang[nya] tetapi bukan orang pada masa ini dahulu-

⁶ Catalogue information at http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_12379&index=0

⁷ http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=mss_malay_c_2_fs001r
 I am grateful to Annabel Gallop for drawing my attention to this.

dahulu punya perbuatan ini maka orang sekarang ini sedikit-sedikit dicandanya pulak jadilah berpanjangan [?] kata,” f. 5.r.). More remarkable still is the fact that each and every one of the 150 following folios are headed with the warning: “jangan beriman akan[nya],” do not put faith in [it] (see Fig. 3).⁸ Similarly, a copy of *Hikayat Maharaja Boma* contains the same warning (“jangan beriman”) on every folio, and a longer note warns that if the reader does put faith in the story, his or her sins will be as innumerable as the stars in the sky and the sand on the beach (“dosanya tiada terbilang sebilang bintang di langit dan sebilang gersik di pantai,” BL MSS Malay C8 f.64r).⁹ This occurrence of very similar annotation in two manuscripts (from two distinct collections, those of Crawford and Leyden) suggests that it may have been relatively common practice. The polemic by certain Malay literati against romances featuring extra-Islamic deities is well known (on Nur al-Din al-Raniri’s condemnation of *Hikayat Indraputra* see Braginsky 2004: 383-6, for similar critiques by Safirin and Abdullah Munsyi see Braginsky 2002). What is striking here, however, is the fact that the annotators were presumably satisfied with their disclaimers and did not think it necessary to censor the text outright or indeed to destroy it altogether.

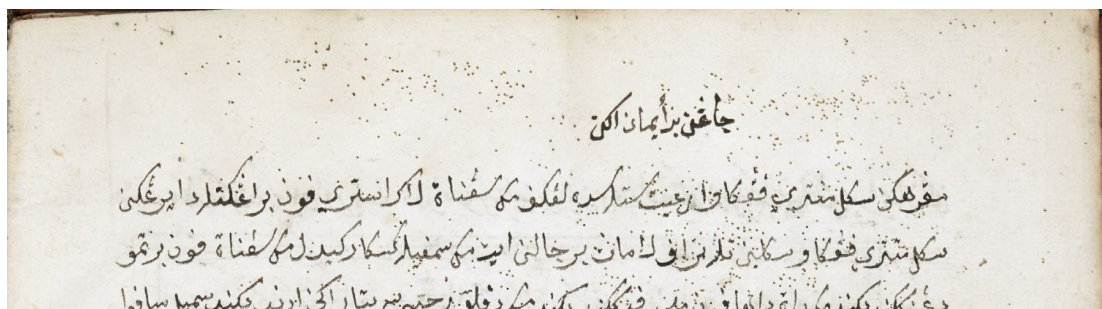


Fig. 3: “jangan beriman akan (dia)” in BL MSS Malay C2 (f.2v). Image courtesy of the British Library Board.

Such was not the case with the annotation in LUB Cod.Or. 1953, a compendium of heterogeneous religious works owned by Nyonya Halimah of Kampung Krukut, Batavia. The short texts contained in it included *Hikayat Nabi bercukur*, which evoked the ire of a reader to the extent that he (or she) blacked it out in its entirety (LUB Cod.Or. 1953, pp. 214-233, see Wieringa 1998: 178-81). Also known in Javanese, Acehnese, Sundanese, Makassarrese and Bugis, the text relates how the Angel Gabriel shaved the Prophet’s head and was believed to protect the reader from “various disasters and illnesses and to be a guarantee for giving the correct answers to the questions of the angels of the grave” (Wieringa 1998: 73). A note at the end of the redacted text in Cod.Or.1953 gives the reason for the excision: “do not believe this tale of shaving as it is the work of a Rafidhi infidel,” “jangan percaya hikayat bercukur ini kerana karangan Rafidhi kafir” (f. 233). While we may wonder why *Hikayat Nabi bercukur* was considered worse than any of the other texts in the compendium, it is

⁸ See also Gallop’s blog post in fn. 12.

⁹ http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=MSS_Malay_C_2&index=1

obvious that the offended reader considered it so objectionable that it was his or her duty to remove it.

The rarest kind of annotation, so rare that only two sparse examples are offered here, is readers' responses to the text. On the final page of *Hikayat Dewa Mandu*, one reader noted in Rumi: "ini hikayat chap tje" (BL Add MS 12376 f.222r). The use of the term *capcai*, derived from Hokkien and literally meaning mixed vegetables, is particularly apposite since the owner of the manuscript is said to be Chinese: one Encik Babah in Semarang.¹⁰ However throwaway and opaque this remark is, it is nevertheless a comment on the text by a reader of its time. Did Encik Babah, if he was in fact the author of the note, mean that the text was a hodgepodge? Chambert-Loir's description of this manuscript in his study of the *Hikayat Dewa Mandu* remarks that it appears to be copied in three different hands and even alternates lines from different passages (1980: 34-6), so it would be fair to call it a *melange*. Chambert-Loir also identifies annotation in both Jawi and Rumi, including a phrase repeated numerous times in which someone called Baba Bagus requests a certificate of marriage (1980: 35). Disjointed though the annotation is, it provides a unique picture of the culturally heterogeneous environment of one of its readers: an ethnic Chinese in Semarang, literate in Rumi and Jawi, leafing through a Javanese-influenced Malay romance, making practice attempts at an official letter and dashing off a few sketches of *wayang* puppet heads. This bespeaks a *capcai* milieu indeed, and is a compelling corrective to the stereotypical image of readers of traditional Malay literature.

The second example also provides some of the very scant available evidence of the identity of readers. On the final page of *Hikayat Syah Firman* (LUB Klinkert 32), are a series of notes by, it would seem, several different people, one of whom is by a woman named Rasyimah, apparently in response to the notice on the previous page to return the book after one day.¹¹

¹⁰ http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_12376&index=0

¹¹ Iskandar (1999: 714) seems to imply that all the notes are by Rasyimah but there appear to be two fairly distinct hands.

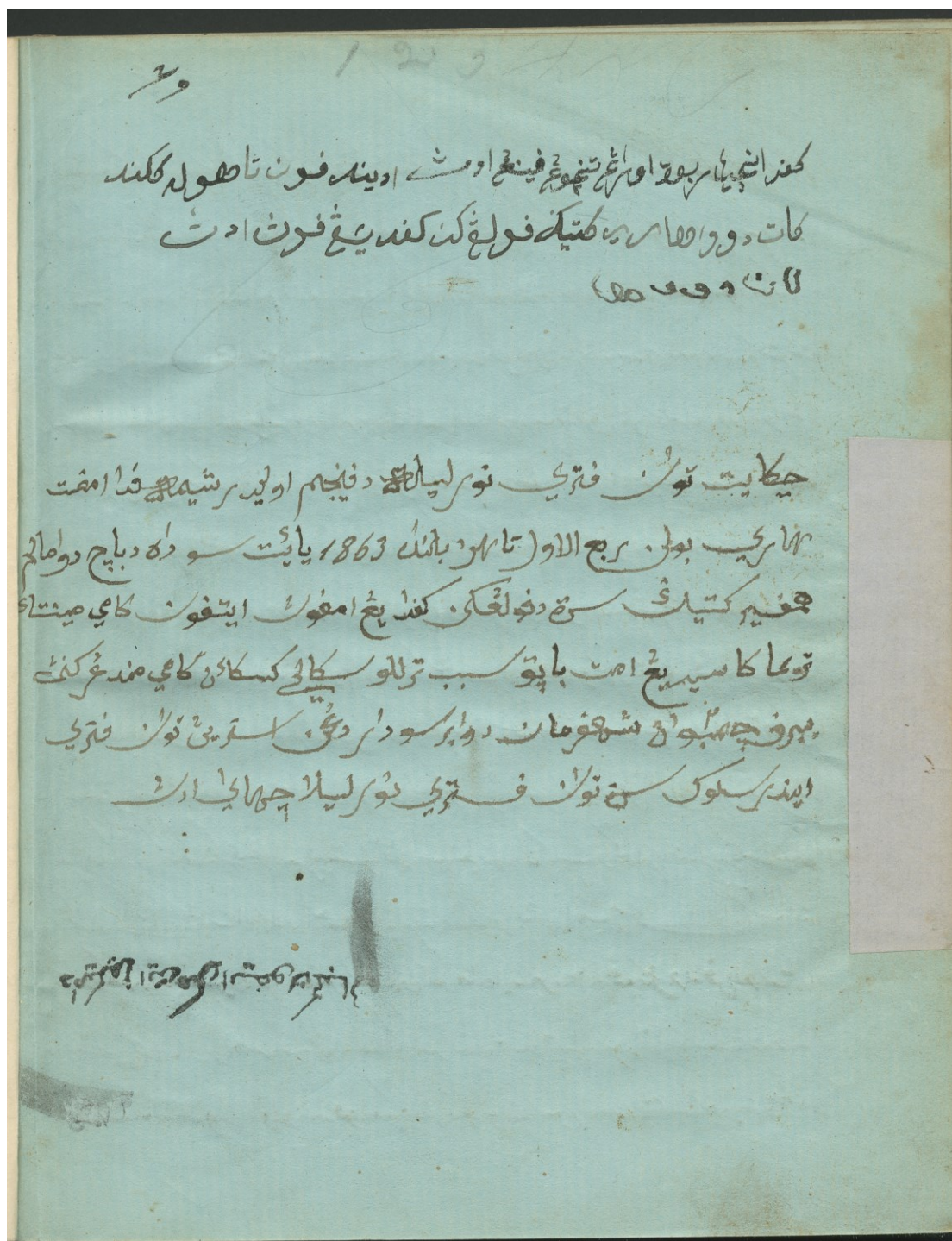


Fig. 4: Rasyimah's annotation in LUB Klinkert 32. Image courtesy of Leiden University Library.

Hikayat Tuan Puteri Nur Lelah was borrowed by Rasyimah on the fourth day of Rabi' al-awwal in the Dutch year 1863, and was read for two nights. Just before the third night it was returned to its owner. For that we express our profuse thanks, because we greatly enjoyed hearing about the exploits of Syah Firman and his brother, together with their wives Tuan Puteri Indera Seloka and Tuan Puteri Nur Lela Cahaya. Then it was returned.

Hikayat Tuan Puteri Nur Lelah dipinjam oleh Rasyimah pada empat hari bulan Rabi al-awwal tahun Belanda 1863 iaitu sudah dibaca dua malam hampir ketiga serta dipulangkan kepada

yang empunya itupun kami minta terima kasih yang amat banyak sebab terlalu sekali kesukaan kami mendengarkannya beberapa cumbu-cumbuan Syah Firman dua bersaudara dengan isterinya Tuan Puteri Indera Seloka serta Tuan Puteri Nur Lela Cahaya adanya demikian itu maka ia pun kembali (LUB Kl. 32 final p., see Fig. 4).

As is well known, privately owned books sometimes circulated publicly. This particular manuscript belonged to a certain Encik Sulung, the grandchild of one Encik Ribut in Tanjung Pinang. As Proudfoot noted, access to manuscripts was “powerfully . . . conditioned by real and imaginary social relations” (2002: 121), and in this note we can see precisely those personal connections gratefully acknowledged. We may surmise that Rasyimah was sufficiently intimate with or important to Encik Sulung that she was confident her note would be received with approval. Given that the colophon of the manuscript asks readers to return the book after one day, it may even be, as Iskandar suggests (1999: 714) that Rasyimah’s note was an apology for going overdue. This marginal note in Klinkert 32 functions as an acknowledgment and perhaps even a display of social relations between reader and owner of the manuscript.

A final category of annotation in literary manuscripts that certainly warrants a mention, in spite of its scarcity, is pictorial annotation: drawings made by readers. Encik Babah’s *Hikayat Dewa Mandu*, discussed above, has a pages adorned with sketches of the hero Panji’s head¹² in the *wayang* style—or rather, various attempts at his head (BL Add MS 12376 f. 221r). Another page contains an Arabic phrase, another *wayang* head (again apparently a noble male) and three foliate decorations (f. 219r). Similar foliate designs, reminiscent of Malay woodcarving patterns, are found in the Perlis *Hikayat Nabi Yusuf*, as well as a page of text that devolves into scrawls, ending with a little floral bouquet (BL MSS Malay D4 f.31r). Another *wayang* figure, next to a flowering plant, appears in a copy of *Hikayat Cekel Waneng Pati*, this time a full figure but with the face unfortunately torn off (BL Malay C2 f.111.v, see Fig. 5). The similar repertoire of images—*wayang* heroes, perhaps the protagonists of the stories in the manuscripts, and foliate designs—is striking. The absence of any such images in *kitab* manuscripts is only one of the many marked differences in annotation practice, explored in the next section.

¹² I am indebted to Gallop’s blog post for positively identifying the sketched character.
http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/asian-and-african/2015/06/panji-stories-in-malay.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3Aasian-and-african+%28Asia+and+Africa%29



Fig. 5: wayang figure in BL MSS Malay C2. Image courtesy of the British Library Board.

Marginalia in Malay *kitab* manuscripts

The abundance of marginalia in *kitab* manuscripts makes clear that they were produced and used in a more definitively literate milieu than is the case with literary manuscripts. Readers of *kitab*, then as now, seem to have read with pen in hand (see, for example, <http://www.antarafoto.com/peristiwa/v1250422371>). Students would have made their own copies of the texts they were studying, taking down notes in the margins from the explanations provided by their teachers. *Kitab* manuscripts display all the categories of marginalia described above—ownership marks, *probatio pennae*, and so on—but in far greater quantities. Indeed, the report on another EAP project, this time of an east Javanese *pesantren* collection (EAP261), asserts that, since most *kitab* texts are standard and many are readily available in print, the value of certain collections of *kitab*

manuscripts lies precisely in their marginalia. This unique marginalia found on the borders of the standard texts reveals, in the words of the report, “the efforts of Indonesian Ulama to translate Islam into the local context.”¹³ The recently published catalogue of the Dayah Tanoh Abee collection likewise draws attention to the marginalia and the way in which manuscripts were used as a convenient means of noting down all sorts of things, from records of the death of one Sayyid Abu Bakar in 1982 and of an earthquake in 1832, to recipes and magical diagrams connected to sexual intercourse, to warnings against any attempts to alienate the manuscript from its owner and his heirs, whether by sale, pawning, renting or loaning out (Fathurahman 2010: xx-xxiii).¹⁴

This idiosyncratic marginalia is dwarfed by the very large amount of scholarly annotation (see for example images in Fathurahman 2010: 76, 94, 144, 157, 272, 275). Malay *kitab* annotation conventions appear similar to those in the wider Islamic manuscript tradition, suggesting a continuity of scribal and pedagogical practices across the Muslim world. Such marginalia is ubiquitous in Arabic Islamic manuscripts. “Although some medieval authors, such as al-‘Amawi, recommended the limitation of the number of marginal notes to prevent the page from being covered in writing,” Déroche writes, “some manuscripts show a veritable invasion of all the available space” (2000: 188). Or, in Gacek’s words, “[s]ometimes the manuscript was glossed so thoroughly that there is hardly any white space left on its pages” (2009: 115). Much of this marginalia consisted of scholarly glosses (*ḥāshiyah*, *ta’līq*, *tafsīr*, *sharḥ*, *fā’idah*, *ṭurrah* and *hāmish* are among the terms used) on the main text (or *matn*), and observed certain conventions, delineated by Gacek (2009: 114-117). Among the typical features of marginalia in Islamic manuscripts is that the note would usually be in a smaller hand, set off at an angle to the main text (or even upside down); the note begins with a truncated letter *shīn*, often without the dots, denoting the first letter of the word *sharḥ* (Ar.: gloss), and ends with the letter *hā’* (signifying Ar. *intaha*: end) (Gacek 2009: 115, 117). The use of overlining (rather than the Western convention of underlining) is another feature of Islamic manuscripts generally (Gacek 2009: 173) that is readily found in the Malay corpus.

That annotation was intrinsic to *kitab* manuscripts is evident from van Bruinessen’s observations on present-day printed *kitab*, known as *kitab kuning* from their yellowish paper, which not only reproduce the identical texts of the manuscript tradition, but also preserve the visual features of manuscripts. *Kitab kuning* usually include the commentaries of famous authorities alongside the main text, while still providing space for the contemporary reader’s own annotations. As van Bruinessen explains, producers of *kitab kuning* take pains to reproduce the format of manuscripts, in order to appeal to tradition-minded buyers:

The most common format for the classical *kitab* for *pesantren* use is just under a quarto (26 cm), and unbound. The quires (*koras*) are loose in the cover, so that the *santri* may take out any single page that he happens to be studying. This is another physical characteristic that

¹³ http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project.a4d?projID=EAP061;r=41

¹⁴ One would assume that similar records of important events might be found in literary texts, but I have come across no examples so far. This might be another significant difference between the recording habits of readers of the two different genres.

seems to have a largely symbolic meaning: it makes the *kitab* look more classical. *Kitab* by modern authors, translators or commentators are never in this format. Many users of classical *kitab* are strongly attached to it, and the publishers oblige their customers. Some even print *kitab* on orange-tinted (*kuning*) paper (produced especially for them by Indonesian factories) because this, too, seems to be more ‘classical’ in the users’ minds (1990: 235).

The direct continuity of form and content between manuscript and printed *kitab* is a reminder that this is the single living—indeed, flourishing—branch of the Malay manuscript tradition. While literary texts of the manuscript tradition are no longer read for pleasure and are reprinted only for scholarly or antiquarian reasons, the texts of the *kitab* tradition, as well as its reading and annotation practices, are still reproduced across Indonesia and Malaysia.

EAP205/3/1: a “classical Malay Islamic compendium” from a west Sumatran *surau*

The *kitab* manuscript discussed here comes from the collection of the Surau Syekh Abdurrahman in Lima Puluh Kota, west Sumatra. According to Katkova’s survey report, a mere three manuscripts remain in the *surau*’s possession, of which two have been digitised.¹⁵ The manuscript includes a variety of texts, in both Malay and Arabic. The component texts have yet to be fully identified, but include works, in Arabic and Malay, on fasting, the life of the Prophet, Minangkabau adat, the teachings of the Prophet to his daughter Fatima, and Abdurrauf Singkili’s *Kifāyat al-muḥtājīn*. The *fasal* divisions mentioned in Katkova’s description may be modern additions.¹⁶ The Yusuf catalogue clarifies that the manuscript is composed of fifteen unbound quires. It is evident from Yusuf’s description that the quires were in a different order when observed by the Universitas Andalas team as compared to when it was photographed for the EAP.¹⁷ The vast majority of marginal notes in the compendium are in a number of neat, competent Jawi hands, sometimes in Arabic and at other times in Malay. Apparently annotated over several centuries, the early notes show awareness of the conventions of annotation in the larger Muslim world, in contrast with the later notes which suggest a rupture in that tradition of scholarship.

As with many other manuscripts identified by her digitisation project, Katkova dates EAP205/3/1 to the eighteenth century. Such a date would be remarkable, given the fact that the bulk of extant Malay manuscripts in the better known collections date from the nineteenth century. A

¹⁵ The collection has also been catalogued by a team from Universitas Andalas in 2003-4, which reported only two codices and four documents (Yusuf 2006: 86-90; note that EAP205/3/1 is catalogued as MM. 03. Batu Ampa. 01).

¹⁶ Apart from the marginal “dua” in Rumi by the most recent annotator on p. 25. However, it appears that the images have been cropped so that the full margins are not visible—rather unfortunate and ironic for the present project! At any rate, it appears that the *fasal* divisions are not intrinsic to the manuscript but are modern interpolations.

¹⁷ The Yusuf catalogue (2006: 86) states that the marginalia by Abojami (sic) warning that the text is “sulit dipahami” occurs at the very end of the work, whereas in the EAP it is found on p. 56.

cursory comparison of watermarks provided by Katkova for manuscripts which she attributes to the eighteenth-century with those published in Ricklefs and Voorhoeve may justify a late eighteenth-century date.¹⁸ Moreover, the mix of European and *dluwang* paper is unusual, and possibly an indication that the manuscript is indeed relatively old.¹⁹ The *surau* itself was reportedly established upon the return of Syekh Abdurrahman from Mecca in 1840. If EAP205/3/1 does indeed date from the late eighteenth century, it predates not just the foundation of the *surau*, but also the modernist reformist movement and the Padri wars, discussed below. It stands to reason that such an imposing volume, representing a high level of Islamic scholarship, would come from what Dobbin (2012) characterises as the “golden age” of the Minangkabau *surau*.

A brief overview of the rise and decline of the Minangkabau *surau* may help to situate this manuscript belonging to Surau Syekh Abdurrahman within its particular historical context. Sufi orders centred around religious complexes termed *surau* appear to have been central to Minangkabau Islam at least since the establishment in the seventeenth century of Syekh Burhanuddin’s *tariqa* in Ulakan, north of Padang. Oman Fatturahman distinguishes the Minangkabau *surau* from the Javanese *pesantren* on the basis that not all *pesantren* were involved in spreading *tariqa* Sufism, whereas almost all *surau* were associated with a *tariqa*, whether Shattari, Naqshbandi or Sammani (2008: 22). The heyday of the Minangkabau *surau* was the late eighteenth century when, as Dobbin (2012) explains, the coffee and cassia boom supported the expansion of Naqshbandi and Shattari *tariqa*, which “attracted hundreds of students from throughout Minangkabau.” The shari’ah-compliant character of these *surau*, and their role as conduits of orthodox Islamic teachings, hosting teachers from Mecca, Medina and Aceh, is emphasised by Azra (2004: 145). Yet despite the dominance and popularity of the *surau*, Sufi practices associated with them were always vulnerable to attack as insufficiently orthodox. That the tomb of Syekh Burhanuddin became a place of pilgrimage and of Sufi rituals involving dancing and music, for instance, was an unacceptable irony for the twentieth-century reformist Hamka (Azra 2004: 145). Subsequent waves of Islamic activists and thinkers, including the Padris and the Kaum Muda/Muhammadiyah, attacked and eroded the position of the *surau* as the pre-eminent Islamic establishment in west Sumatra.

The Padri attack on Minangkabau religious practices was launched initially from within, from the *surau* of Tuanku Nan Rinceh in Agam. Formerly a pupil of the reformist Naqshbandi Tuanku Nan Tua, Tuanku Nan Rinceh began to put into practice the more radical ideas of the returning Padri Haji Miskin. This included assaults on villages and *surau* which did not comply with Padri ideas. If the Padri wars had a decisive effect on the “Minangkabau matriarchate,” as Hadler argues (2008: 5), it must

¹⁸ Katkova’s survey report does not identify any watermarks for the compendium under discussion here, EAP205/3/1. Two watermarks identified for other works, dated to the eighteenth century, are LVC and JH & Zoon, from the well-known Dutch paper mill J. Honig & Zoon(en) (Katkova nd: 12). In Ricklefs and Voorhoeve’s catalogue, both these watermarks (if LVC = LVG) are associated with manuscripts from the early nineteenth-century collections of Crawford, Mackenzie, Marsden, Leyden and Raffles. Thus it is not impossible that these particular manuscripts in the collection of Nurdin Tuanku Gapuak are eighteenth century. If they are, then these manuscripts that have remained in the field may be as old as those in European collections.

¹⁹ Cf. Yusuf catalogue, which calls the paper *kertas lokal* (2006: 86).

have been just as transformative for the surviving Sufi *surau*. It is presumably because of the Padri challenge that the Minangkabau *tariqa* became so orthodox—at least as compared to the Javanese. According to Fathurahman, a unique feature of the Shattariya in Minangkabau is its explicit rejection of the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud*, even in its watered-down nineteenth-century form. This is not the case for the Shattariya elsewhere, Faturahman points out, whether in the Haramayn or in Java (2008: 122). As noted below, there is at least one reference to Ibn ‘Arabi in EAP205/3/1. If the date of the manuscript and its provenance could be established with more certainty, it could well provide more insight into the position of this much debated doctrine in the Minangkabau Naqshbandiya.

The *surau* came to political prominence once again during the 1908 anti-tax rebellion in west Sumatra. Resistance to a head-tax imposed by the Dutch was led by Shattariya *surau* leaders, precisely from the geographical area and in some cases from the very lineages that had fuelled the Padri revolt (Dobbin 1998: 315-6). Despite the amulets promising invulnerability to bullets upon their wearers which were distributed by the rebellion’s leaders, the Dutch quickly put down the rebellion, resulting in the deaths in battle of some 90 fighters and the eventual exile of their leaders (316). This failed uprising, writes Hadler, “marked the defeat of the Sufi *tarekat* . . . as organizations capable of mobilizing mass resistance in West Sumatra” (2008: 13).

In the decades following this political and military defeat came the decline of the *surau* as the foremost religious and educational institution in Minangkabau society. The influential Shaikh Ahmad Khatib (d. 1915), the Shafi’i *imam* at the great mosque in Mecca and himself a Minangkabau, was the author of three tracts denouncing the Naqshbandi order (Ricklefs 2008: 204). Two of his students, Djamil Djambek and Haji Rasul (Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah) returned to Sumatra carrying the message of modernist Islam, emphatically opposed to both adat and the Minangkabau Sufi old order. In 1909, Haji Rasul established the first ‘modern’ Islamic school in the region, the Adabiyah School in Padang, which was to be followed by the “total reformation of the Islamic schools in Minangkabau” (Hadler 2008: 102). (It is interesting to note that Haji Rasul’s own father was a Naqshbandi leader, to say nothing of the apparently fraught relationship between Haji Rasul and his son, Hamka.) It was Haji Rasul who, in 1925, set up the first Sumatran branch of Muhammadiyah in his home village of Sungai Batang. The expansion and eventual dominance of modernist understandings of Islam meant the inevitable marginalisation of the Sufi *surau*, to say nothing of an ongoing societal division between Kaum Muda and Kaum Tua.²⁰

As Katkova explains, Surau Syeikh Abdurrahman was at the heart of an institutional complex including buildings for study, ritual practice and residence for adherents of the Naqshbandi *tariqa* (nd:19). In common with many *surau* in the region, according to Katkova, it was once a centre of study not just for Sufi doctrine but Islamic education generally, and is said to have once held hundreds of manuscripts. Presumably based on information from the current syeikh, Syahrani Khalil, Katkova reports that the *surau* was founded by Syeikh Abdurrahman, who is reported to have been

²⁰ For how this continuing split affected Katkova’s access to *surau* see her survey (nd: 24).

born in 1777 and died in 1899. The al-Manar complex which includes Surau Syekh Abdurrahman is apparently still a centre for the study of Qur'an recitation and for *suluk* rituals. The present syekh, Syahrani Khalil, moreover, is the direct descendant of Syekh Abdurrahman.²¹

Syeikh Abdurrahman was also the grandfather of Mohammad Hatta, first vice president of Indonesia. In his memoirs, Hatta provides an intriguing glimpse into the Batu Hampar *surau* at the beginning of the twentieth century. Hatta relates how, under the leadership of Syekh Abdurrahman, the *surau* attracted students from Sumatra, Kalimantan and Malaya (1979: 14). Syekh Abdurrahman's achievement was to "make peace between that which had always been felt to be opposed in Minangkabau: the law of Islam and the law of adat" (16). His Sufi teachings were a means for living more righteously and loving Allah, but "chanting of prayers and of the *shahadah* which resulted in forgetfulness of the self and furthermore forgetfulness of God was ruled to be haram" (15). Also noteworthy is Hatta's account of the teachings of his uncle, Syekh Arshad, head of the Batu Hampar *surau* during Hatta's childhood, emphasising that Allah and his creation are utterly separate ("Allah the one could not have the same form or be the same as his creations" 20). What Hatta recounts here is of course the reiteration of the old controversy, going back to Abdul Rauf al-Singkili and earlier, about *wahdat al-wujud*. The teachings of the Batu Hampar *surau*, at least in Hatta's recollection, were solidly shari'a-minded, 'reformed' Sufism.²²

Surau Abdurrahman evidently declined greatly as a centre for Islamic learning over the twentieth century, to judge only from the surviving number of texts in its collection. While in 2008/9 Katkova was able to access only three manuscripts belonging to the Syekh Abdurrahman *surau* (and only about 100 manuscripts in total from fifteen collections across West Sumatra) (nd: 19, 25), Hatta remembers being impressed by the collection of books in his uncle's house: "I was also astonished to see his so numerous treasury of books. All of them were written in Arabic" (1979: 19). Even allowing for the fact that by the 1910s many of these books would have been printed or lithographed, it would still have been an impressive collection. Hatta also claims that there was near universal literacy in Jawi in Minangkabau at this time. Comparing the lacklustre attendance at Dutch schools during his childhood, Hatta notes that the *surau* were full to bursting and that there was hardly anyone illiterate in Arabic script in Minangkabau at the time (1979: 24). This situation is quite different in present-day west Sumatra, as will be evident from the most recent marginalia in EAP205/3/1.

Annotation in EAP205/3/1

²¹ <http://surautuo.blogspot.co.uk/2013/06/blog-post.html>

²² Further insight into the bitter opposition between Sufi *surau* and the modernising Kaum Muda in the 1940s is provided by the *Oestaz A. Ma'sjoek* affair, as described by Sudarmoko (2010: 195-202).

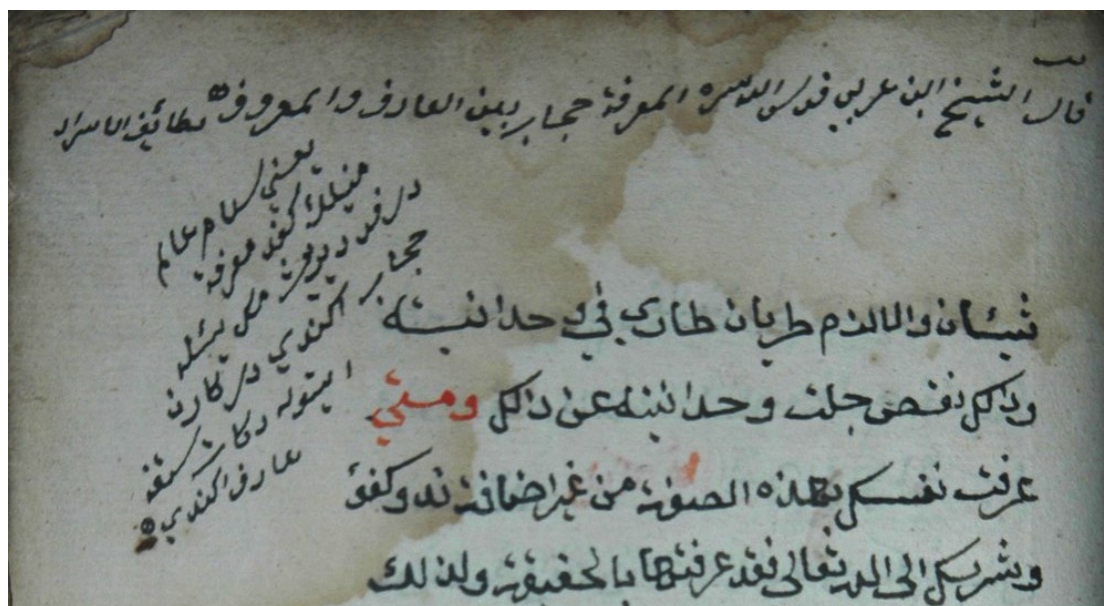


Fig. 6: annotation referring to Ibn 'Arabi in EAP205/3/1. Image courtesy of the Endangered Archives Programme.

The vast majority of annotations here are commentaries, expanding on the text, with or without reference to other authorities. There are, at the same time, long passages without annotation, or with only modern, Rumi annotation. Some notes are cross-references to other authoritative sources, such as an intriguing one mentioning a key thinker for Malay (and other) Sufism (p. 13, see Fig. 6). The (unidentified) text is in Arabic, but the note is in Malay. Using the standard abbreviations of an undotted letter *shīn* and a letter *hā'* to mark it off, the note in the top margin quotes from "al-Sheikh Ibn 'Arabi": "al-ma'rifat al-ḥijāb bayn al-ʿārif wa'l-ma'rūf" ("gnosis is the veil between the gnostic and that which is known," to give it a very approximate translation). In the left margin a further note by the same hand expounds on the aphorism: "ya'ni selama 'alim menilik kepada ma'rifat daripada dirinya maka itulah hijab akan dia dari kerana itulah dikata setengah 'arif akan dia" (a very approximate translation: "that is, so long as the adept focuses upon gnosis rather than upon himself, that becomes the veil for him; or so it is said by some gnostics"). Although for the present reader the Malay text does little to elucidate the Arabic, what is clear is that the milieu in which this text was read and studied was one familiar with Ibn 'Arabi, sometime *bête noire* of reformist Islam. Secondly, it appears that the annotator was reading the book with an instructor who was providing him with the explanation included in the marginal notes. This is of course exactly as might be expected, but worthy of remark in comparison to the twentieth century notes which can boast no such familiarity with classical Islamic scholarship and pedagogy. Another cross-reference to an authoritative work, quoting in Arabic from a *Nihāya* (*Nihāyat al-muḥtāj* of Ramli, d. 1595?) occurs on p. 86. A possibly more unusual reference to a work not strictly in the *kitab* tradition, Nur al-Din al-Raniri's encyclopaedic mirror for princes, the *Bustan al-Salatin*, appears in the right hand margin of p. 127. Here, a quotation attributed to 'Aisyah concerning the five external (*zahir*) and five internal

(*batin*) characteristics of wise people (*orang berakal*) are enumerated. The marginalia gives its source as “Bustan al-‘arifin karangan Syekh Nur al-Din”: Book 7 of the *Bustan al-Salatin*, on the topic of *akal*, was popular as a free-standing text, under the title of *Bustan al-‘arifin* (Braginsky 20014: 450-1). The reference to the *Bustan al-‘arifin* here is an intriguing indication that readers in the Minangkabau *surau* were conversant with texts from beyond the *kitab* tradition, narrowly defined.

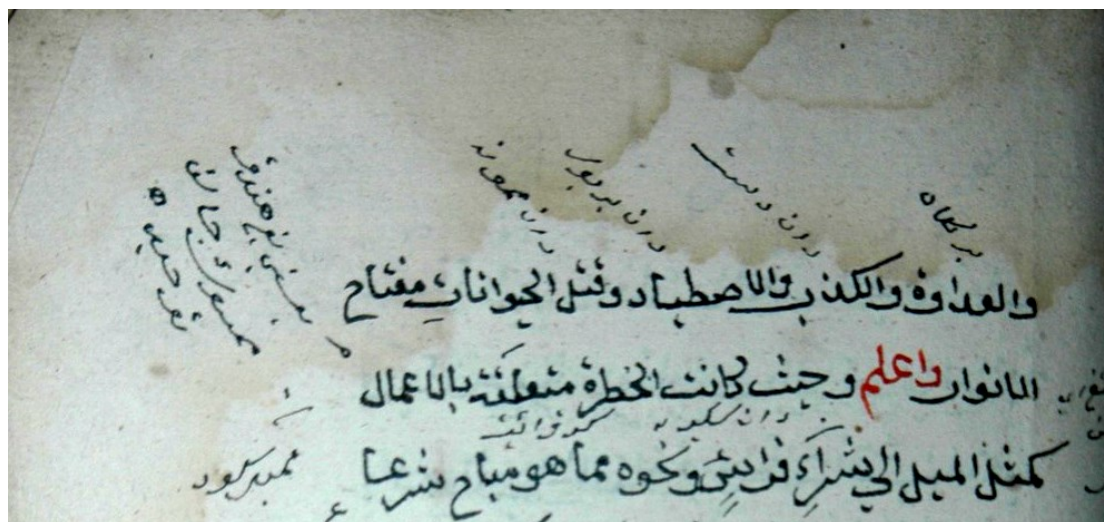


Fig. 7: annotation as translation in EAP205/3/1. Image courtesy of the Endangered Archives Programme.

Annotation as translation is a key feature of Malay *kitab*, and is abundantly represented in EAP205/3/1. Setting aside interlinear translation, which may have been completed at the same time as the Arabic text, there are numerous examples of annotation as translation, with at times almost every word provided with Malay equivalents by the annotator (p. 40, see Fig. 7). In the very top line of text, for example, can be read “dusta,” “dan berburu,” “dan memunuh,” glossing each word of the Arabic original. This annotator characteristically uses the word “ya’ni” to begin notes that are not direct translations but more expansive explanations. The notes appear not only in the margins but also between the lines of the text-block. Another example of a text heavily annotated for translation occurs on p. 183. Here, for instance, the word “salāṭīn” is glossed as “raja” (we might wonder why it is the relatively easy word that is glossed—was the annotation made by a beginning student?).

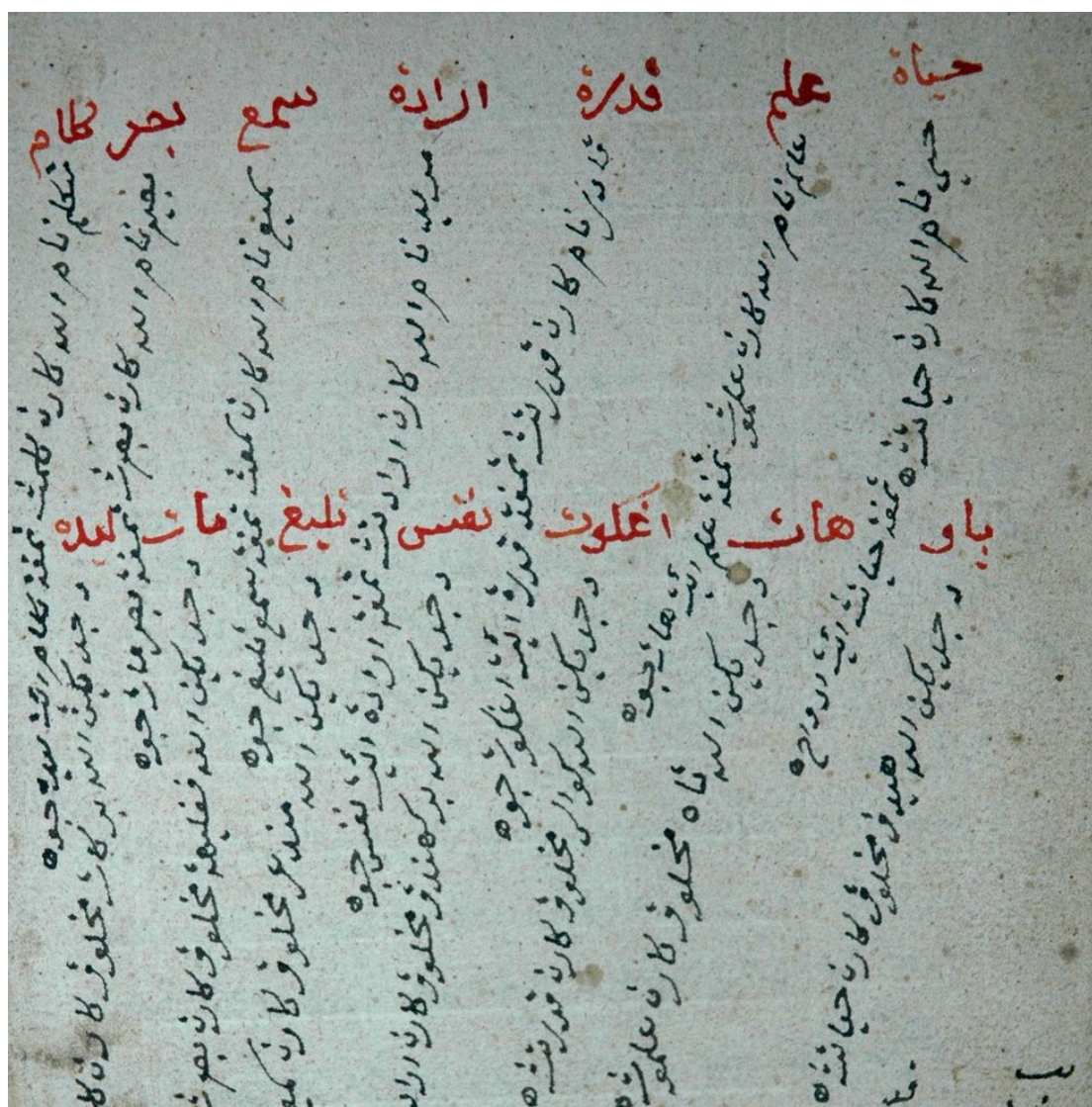


Fig. 8. 'worksheet' of the names and attributes of Allah in EAP205/3/1. Image courtesy of the Endangered Archives Programme.

Much of the annotation in EAP205/3/1 is found clustered on pages at the beginning and end of texts.²³ These were apparently convenient places to record miscellaneous material, including what appear similar to lecture notes or worksheets. On p. 139 (Fig. 8), for example, the essence (*dhāt*) of God are rubricated in the top line, with another parallel line of rubrication below with the corresponding location of the attribute. Explanation of both sets of terms appears in black ink and at right angles. A longer note in the same hand at the bottom of the page expands further on the essence. Here a blank page has been used almost as lecture notes on a particular topic. On p. 136 again it appears that the page has been laid out to provide for the student's notes. Here the main text

²³ These are probably also the beginnings and ends of quires, though this cannot be ascertained from the digitised manuscript.

is simply the first part of the *shahadah*, but most of the page is taken up by the oblique notes in a different hand, expounding on each word.

Annotations are of course not always in the form of words, but *kitab* texts contain no sketches of wayang figures or flowers. Blank pages of EAP205/3/1 have also been used as convenient spaces for *azimat* or magical diagrams, including a model of an “*azimat berniaga*,” for use in trade, in what looks like a modern Jawi hand (p. 400). The *azimat* is to be copied onto paper and worn, thereby encouraging rapid sales! Diagrams in an older hand are also found on two adjacent pages (391-2), possibly illustrating stages of human gestation. While pictorial annotation in the literary manuscripts seems to be motivated mostly by whimsy, diagrams in the *kitab* manuscripts seem to have a pedagogic or even magical function.

Although it seems likely that there was more than one scholarly annotator, I have not been able to distinguish between different scholarly annotating hands. There are, however, three other distinguishable hands. The first may be called the Fatimah Zahra annotator, responsible for two notes (pp. 316 and 401-2). These notes are in a thick pen and a dark ink that has bled through or corroded the paper, to the extent that the marginalia is not readily decipherable, though the name of the Prophet’s daughter, Fatimah Zahra, is evident in both (the ink has also damaged the reverse of the page). It is possible that the short treatise with diagrams on pp. 391-2 is also by the same hand. These notes, and the short treatise, seem to have been added some time after the main text, as they are in a far less proficient hand. An examination of the quires might show that this treatise appears in the blank page at the end of a gathering. A second distinct annotator appears on the final page of the compendium (at least in the running order represented by the EAP version). This note reads “*hijrat Nabi 1338/1338*” (equivalent to 1919) followed by another note in pencil reading: “*murid ini gelar fakih s-m-r a j negeri Tanjung Barulak*,” “this student is named Faqih s-m-r a j in the town of Tanjung Berolak” (p. 455). If such a note was unlikely to have been left by the syeikhs of the *surau*, could it be that by 1919 the compendium had been removed from the *surau* collection? This would have been around the time of Hatta’s uncle, Syeikh Arshad, the modernist with the impressive library. That the compendium might have left his or the *surau*’s keeping is further suggested by the claim of ownership by the most recent annotator, one Abdul Jani.

The most distinctive annotating hand in the manuscript is also the only one that can be identified, that of Abdul Jani of Batu Sangkar. Occuring dozens of times in the manuscript, Abdul Jani wrote mostly in Rumi, but also infrequently (and, it seems, less confidently) in Jawi. Many of his notes assert his ownership of the manuscript. These ownership marks occur rather randomly throughout the manuscript, the first appearing on the top of p. 18: “*Abdul Jani Batu Sangkar Kota Baru Sungai Tarab*.” Abdul Jani helpfully provides his full address on p. 56. Although residing in Payakumbuh Barat, he is originally from Sungai Tarab, Batu Sangkar, which appears to be some dozen kilometres from the Surau Syeikh Abdurrahman in Akabiluru (p. 56). Several times he dates his notes, in this instance February 25, 1996 and elsewhere September 5, 1995, and December 2, 1996 (p. 408, where this called a date of copying). One can only speculate whether Abdul Jani’s appropriation of the book

was an act of safe-keeping or not. His somewhat overbearing ownership marks are in stark contrast to the lack of any such notices in earlier marginalia (with the exception of the 1919 note above). If the compendium once was communal property, perhaps being thought of as belonging to the *surau* rather than to any one individual, Abdul Jani emphatically claims it as his personal possession.

It seems clear from his hesitant Jawi and the tenor of his remarks that Abdul Jani was not a Sufi scholar or adept, at least not in the manner of those responsible for earlier learned marginalia. Some attempt at *fasal* division appears on the top margin of p. 25, marked “Dua” in his hand. Abdul Jani sometimes labels the contents of particular texts, such as where he notes that it explains fasting in Ramadan, the sins of women, or the origins of Minangkabau customs (“menerangkan soal puasa bulan Ramadan,” p. 58; “Dosa perempuan,” p. 78; “Menerangkan mula alam Minangkabau / adat-istiadat Minang” (p. 408). In these cases, the marginalia seem intended to help a reader less confident in Jawi, such as Abdul Jani himself, in navigating the compendium. Perhaps the most interesting piece of marginalia by Abdul Jani is a caution (in Rumi) that “when reading this book take care because it is difficult to understand,” “Ini kitap kalau membaca hati2 kerana sulit dipaham” (p. 56, see Fig. 9). This is a nice example of public service marginalia, warning other prospective readers of the theological perils of the text. Although elsewhere Abdul Jani’s sense of proud ownership is evident, here a sense of disquiet enters. The fear that an ill-educated or ill-intentioned reader might misunderstand the text’s teachings and thereby propagate heresy is a familiar one in Sufi circles and, given the reformist opposition to the *tariqa* in Minangkabau discussed above, well-founded. A Jawi note very similar in import occurs elsewhere, cautioning “understand this with a teacher who understands,” “Ini fahamkan kepada guru yang faham” (p. 141). Here the note looks to have been written in pencil first and then traced over in ballpoint pen, perhaps by Abdul Jani again. This raises the question of whether, by the time of the decay of the Minangkabau *surau* and the dispersal or destruction of their libraries, there were in fact any remaining “guru yang faham.”

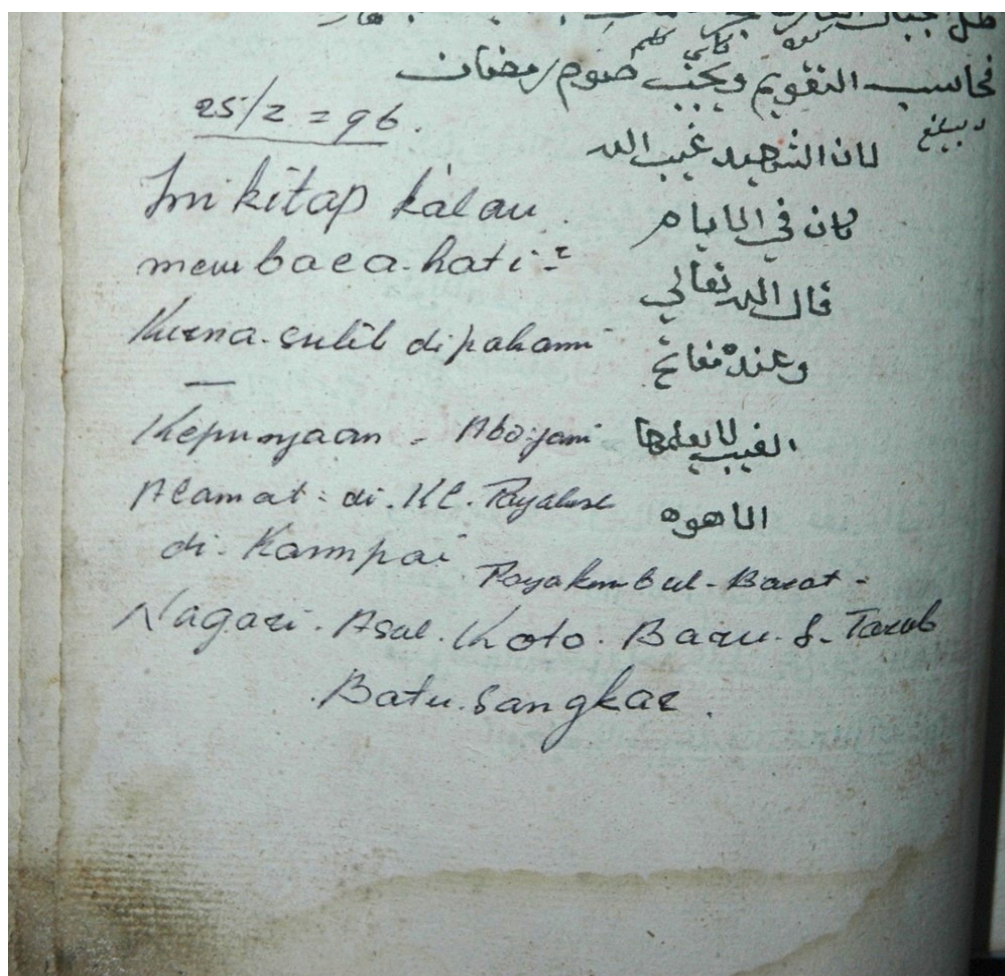


Fig. 9: “kalau membaca hati-hati,” annotation by Abdul Jani in EAP205/3/1. Image courtesy of the Endangered Archives Programme.

Read in conjunction with what is known about the history of the Minangkabau *surau* since the late eighteenth century, the overall story conveyed by the marginalia is one of a decline in the level of scholarship over the life of the manuscript, going from a text used in teaching by students able to write both Malay and Arabic, setting down in writing hadith and scholastic aphorisms from the teacher’s lips relevant to the work under discussion, to a text read by a lone reader apparently isolated from any Sufi community. Along with this shift is the change in the status of the manuscript from communal property to personal property, perhaps as a result of the purge of heterodox texts from the *surau*, forced to modernise by waves of reformism. If the manuscript has now returned to the *surau* and can even be displayed to the world on the EAP website it is perhaps a sign of a resurgence in confidence and interest in different practices of Islam in post-authoritarian Indonesia. It may also be an indication that the manuscript has turned from a vessel of potent ideas, whether regarded as dangerous or revelatory, to a *pusaka* object, valued for its existence rather than for what it says.

Conclusion

It is well known that despite the “flourishing culture of the book” in Islamic societies (Messick 1993: 29), traditional Islamic scholarship gave priority to the spoken word and to the oral transmission of knowledge between student and teacher. In the words of Ibn Khaldun (d. 1382): “[w]riting is the outlining and shaping of letters to indicate audible words which, in turn, indicate what is in the soul. It comes second after oral expression” (qtd. in Messick 1993: 21). And as one researcher of the Persian Islamic tradition warned:

traditional masters in Persia in the field of Islamic philosophy and gnosis . . . would mention at the beginning of their instruction that the good student must learn not only to read correctly the black lines of the text in Arabic or Persian but that he must also be able to read what they would call “the white parts” of the page of what in English would be called reading between the lines. But this reading of the “unwritten” text had to be carried out not according to the student’s individual whim and fancy, but in accordance with the oral transmission stored in the memory of the master and going back through generations of teachers to the original authors of the text and ultimately to the founders and major figures of the school in question (Nasr 1995: 58).

This ‘white space’ —representing in absentia the teacher’s oral explanation—is all the more important in the transmission of knowledge in esoteric teachings, such as those of the Sufi orders. A modern marginal side-head in EAP205/3/1 calls attention to a passage in an unidentified Malay text, which declares that “the Prophet, peace be upon him, said that knowledge is secret, it is neither within books nor written on paper, but is only in the directions of a teacher,” “Sabda Nabi SAW dan ilmu itu di dalam rahsia tiada dalam kitab dan tersurat dalam kertas melainkan pada isyarat guru nyatanya” (p. 143). Thus even when discussing a heavily annotated written work, we must be attentive to the irony that what is most important—at least according to the original users of the book—is not on the page. Perhaps the most important teachings went deliberately unrecorded.

Yet if one ought to be cautious about reading too much into the white space in the *kitab* margins, what more the sparsely annotated pages of Malay literary texts? This obviously extremely preliminary survey of a restricted selection of manuscripts has shown some of the possibilities and limitations of studying annotation: while the annotation that does exist suggests ways in which the text was used, as well as the social relations and the cultural milieu in which it was embedded, it almost never reveals what readers thought. That readers did not record their responses to the text, or even note down glosses of difficult words, is nevertheless a useful reminder that the reading culture of Malay literary texts was profoundly different not just from that of readers of printed books, but also from that of readers of *kitab* manuscripts. This paper has sketched the two different sets of annotation conventions at work in the two corpora, bespeaking two very different manuscript cultures. Precisely the lack of overlap between categories of annotation in one set of manuscripts and

another is worth investigating further: even, for instance, ownership marks, which might be expected to be equally present in both, seem to be more represented in literary as compared to *kitab* manuscripts. The lack of scholarly annotation in literary manuscripts, so stark when set against the ubiquitous glosses in *kitab* manuscripts, is another key point of contrast. In thinking about the paratextual aspects of Malay manuscripts—and still more so their extratextual significance: what they meant to readers of their own time—the contrast between the two corpora may be illuminating.

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