

The Language of Malay Manuscript Art: A Tribute to Ian Proudfoot and the Malay Concordance Project

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ABSTRACT

Dr Ian Proudfoot (1946-2011) of the Australian National University was renowned for his research on early Malay printing and literature, and traditional Muslim calendars from Southeast Asia. Yet perhaps his most valuable contribution to the field of Malay studies is the Malay Concordance Project, a freely-accessible and searchable online corpus of traditional Malay literature, which at present contains 165 Malay texts, comprising 5.8 million words, dating from the 14th to the 20th century. This article demonstrates the use of the MCP for one particular thematic study, of the traditional Malay vocabulary for the illumination of manuscript books and letters.

Key words: Ian Proudfoot, Malay Concordance Project, Malay manuscript art, manuscript illumination, Malay language

ABSTRAK

Dr Ian Proudfoot (1946-2011), daripada Australian National University, ialah seorang sarjana yang tersohor di bidang penelitian percetakan awal Melayu, kesusasteraan Melayu dan takwim hijriah daripada Nusantara. Namun sumbangan Proudfoot yang paling berharga untuk dunia kajian Melayu mungkin ialah Malay Concordance Project, suatu korpus kesusasteraan Melayu lama dalam talian, yang dewasa ini mencakup 165 teks Melayu dengan 5.8 juta perkataan, berasal daripada kurun ke-14 hingga kurun ke-20. Tulisan ini memperlihatkan kegunaan MCP untuk suatu kajian bertema, iaitu penyelidikan peristilahan bahasa Melayu untuk hiasan dalam kitab dan warkah lama.

Kata kunci: Ian Proudfoot, Projek Konkordans Melayu, hiasan dalam manuskrip Melayu, iluminasi manuskrip, bahasa Melayu

IAN PROUDFOOT (1946-2011)

I am giving this lecture in honour of Dr Ian Proudfoot, latterly Adjunct Professor in the Faculty of Asian Studies at the Australian National University, who passed away on 23 September 2011, at the age of 65, after a long and brave battle with cancer. It is an especially poignant occasion because two days ago was the first anniversary of his passing, and also because his wife, Mrs Yook Proudfoot, and his elder son James, are able to be present with us today.¹

Ian was born in Melbourne but spent his whole career at the ANU in Canberra, firstly as a student and then on the staff, where he excelled, unusually, in both research and teaching.² I would guess that not many people in the audience today would have met him, for although Ian often visited Malaysia he rarely attended international conferences or seminars. If you wanted to meet Ian, the best way was to head to the local library, for when Ian travelled to Southeast Asia and further afield, his 'fieldwork' was spent in libraries, archives, museums and bookshops, gathering the

primary data on early Malay printing and Malay manuscripts which underpinned all his writings. And on one of these field trips, digging around in musty bookshelves searching for hidden treasure, he did indeed find an unexpected pearl – his future wife, Lee Yook, then a librarian at the National Library of Singapore (Photo 1).

Ian was on close terms with many librarians in the region, including (now Professor) Ding Choo Ming when he was librarian at Tun Seri Lanang Library here at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia; David Chng, then of the National Library of Singapore; and especially Haji Ibrahim bin Ismail at Universiti Malaya Library. Some of Ian's most important articles on early Malay printing were published in the Universiti Malaya Library journal, *Kekal Abadi*, and, thanks to the initiative of Haji Ibrahim, his magisterial *Early Malay Printed Books: a provisional account of materials published in the Singapore-Malaysia area up to 1920, noting holdings in major public collections* was published by the Academy of Malay Studies

and Perpustakaan Universiti Malaya in 1993.³ Ian's obituary in *Kekal Abadi* recalls how 'librarians in Malaysia and Singapore fondly equate him with the hard cover blue book' and speaks for many in characterising his published works as 'uniquely raw and unequalled' (Sinnaamy 2011: 1).



Photo 1. Ian and Yook Proudfoot, Broulee, Batemans Bay, June 2007

Photo: Annabel Gallop

Everyone who knew Ian was struck by his quiet unassuming manner, kindness and generosity of spirit. It was a testament to these qualities that Ian earned the affectionate sobriquet of 'Encik Kaki Sombong' from the Malay staff at the National Library of Singapore,⁴ for there would never have been the slightest danger of the adjective being taken at face value. Yet Ian's gentleness should not be confused with softness, for his intellectual backbone of razor-sharp steel meant that while his critical comments might be tendered with tact and diplomacy, they would by no means be blunted. Among the texts I contributed to the Malay Concordance Project was a collection of documents from Muara Mendras in highland Jambi. I worked from scans of colour slides of the originals, with damage from insects and damp compounding considerable linguistic problems. In describing these sources on the MCP, when Ian wryly noted 'Gallop's paper courageously provides English translations of all four texts',⁵ I immediately understood that the results did not sufficiently stand up to scrutiny.

The affection and admiration that Ian inspired was unique. This is best seen in the book *Lost Times and Untold Tales from the Malay World*, edited by Jan van der Putten and Mary Kilcline Cody

(2009), where 27 scholars came together to write for Ian. Such books in honour of senior scholars are not uncommon, but not infrequently include contributions with little evident link to the interests of the recipient. But for this tribute to Ian, all the writers moved out their comfort zone to fulfill the editors' brief to write an article carefully crafted to reflect Ian's highly individual take on the world – sometimes seemingly whimsical yet fundamentally thought-provoking.⁶ In this *festschrift* every contribution oozes deep personal affection and respect, and it is a great comfort to know that the book was published in time for Ian to be confronted with such irrefutable evidence of his fanbase.

Scholars are judged on their published output of books and articles: the body of writings encapsulating a lifetime spent reading, exploring and thinking. Ian's publications⁷ reflect his quantitative and qualitative compilation of data, but his most important writings soared above the minutiae of detail, offering analyses of the intellectual shifts in Malay society at points of major technological and social change. As Virginia Hooker wrote in her obituary, 'Proudfoot's approach to all his research fields is meticulous in its attention to detail of content and form, but daring in its conception of the implications of that content' (Hooker 2011: 6).

My focus today is not on Ian's penetrating studies on the writing culture of the Malay world, but on the array of research tools of inestimable value that he created. If a measure of a scholarly legacy is the scale of its impact, then Ian's intellectual bequest to the field of Malay studies is perhaps greater than that of any other scholar of his generation. This is because uniquely in the field, Ian combined the highest standards of scholarship and a meticulous approach to data collection with technical wizardry: he was one of the first to harness the potential of computers for Malay studies. For the last few years of his life, fully aware of the likely course of the cancer he was battling, Ian worked hard to ensure that, as much as possible, the fruits of his labours were made freely and publicly accessible via the internet.⁸

These research tools fall into three categories. The first is his *Early Malay Printed Books*, the large 'blue hardcover book' of 858 pages referred to above, published in 1993 in a small print run, copies of which soon became rarer than gold dust. In 2010 Ian mounted this catalogue online in a fully indexed version.⁹ It was joined by an *Addendum* of 109 new or updated entries, of which perhaps the most

valuable part was the listing of a collection of mostly unique Malay lithographed *syair* printed in Singapore, originally in Winstedt's collection and with some titles referred to in his *History of Classical Malay Literature* (Winstedt 1991). After Winstedt's death this collection had been acquired by the Cambridge professor Sir Harold Bailey and is now held in the Ancient India and Iran Trust in Cambridge. Ian deputed his younger son, Nicholas, then on a journey around Europe, to make a detour to Cambridge in 2010. With the assistance of the Honorary Librarian of the Ancient India and Iran Trust, Ursula Sims-Williams, Nicholas photographed and documented these works, on the basis of which Ian was able to prepare the descriptions which can now be found in the online *Addendum*.

Another major area of interest and enquiry was early Muslim calendars, culminating in the publication of *Old Muslim Calendars of Southeast Asia* (Proudfoot 2006). Ian's innovative software for converting Muslim dates and Javanese dates, called *Takwim*, was initially made available via the MCP website but is now available via a CD included in the book. What is still freely available for downloading is a macro Ian devised, called AHAD, for converting AH dates to AD dates.¹⁰ Although many online sites or programmes for conversions of Hijrah dates can be found, the great value of this macro is that it was designed for use within Microsoft Word, so that when working on a document date conversions can be done with a couple of mouse-clicks, without needing to move out of Word.

But arguably overshadowing all these tools in significance is the Malay Concordance Project (MCP) (<http://mcp.anu.edu.au>), which provides online access to a corpus of Malay texts. The MCP will show in an instant how, where and when, and in which texts, certain Malay words were used. I was in the happy position of frequently being used by Ian as a guinea-pig for some of his early inventions, and was amongst the first to try out the MCP, and I still remember well the stir it caused when I first referred to it in a workshop paper in 1998, for an investigation of the term *kudrati*.¹¹ At that time the MCP only contained about 10 or 15 texts for searching, but even so its enormous potential for Malay studies was immediately grasped. Over the past thirteen years the Concordance has grown steadily, and at present contains 165 Malay texts, comprising 5.8 million words, dating from the 14th to the 20th centuries. More significantly, it is now at a stage where it includes nearly all the most important Malay

texts – from the *Sulalat al-Salatin* (*Sejarah Melayu*) and *Hikayat Hang Tuah* to the *Taj al-Salatin* and *Hikayat Abdullah* – as well as examples of most genres of Malay writing, from literary, romantic and historical *hikayat* and *syair* to theological *kitab Jawi*, legal texts and royal letters, and from the earliest Malay Jawi inscription, the Terengganu Stone, to newspaper editorials from the 1930s.¹² While the MCP is certainly not complete,¹³ its current size and scope does mean that a search on the MCP can be regarded as covering a representative selection of Malay written heritage, with texts originating from Aceh to Barus, Banten, Bima, Brunei and Buton, and from Kedah to Kelantan. Access is instant and free; the only requirement is that the Malay Concordance Project should be acknowledged in the footnotes and bibliography of any resulting publication.

Ian wore his erudition lightly, and nowhere is this more evident than in the webpage of the MCP laconically labelled *Texts*.¹⁴ The MCP allows search results to be presented alphabetically (according to linguistic context) or chronologically. In order to facilitate the second option, each of the 165 texts had to be assigned a (probable) date of composition, as well as an (approximate) date of the manuscript on which the edition was based. Anyone who has worked on Malay studies knows that the deceptively simple 'chronological' listing of Malay texts presented on the MCP could only have been compiled by someone with a deep knowledge of Malay literature, and a profound understanding of the methods and modes of its written transmission over the centuries. Even though Ian might have had reservations about it being used as such, the chronological listing itself constitutes a veritable potted 'History of Malay Literature', and the descriptions of individual texts are models of clarity in the face of overwhelming complexity.¹⁵ In some cases, it is clear that in 'merely' preparing the scanned text for the MCP, Ian had had essentially to create a diplomatic edition of the manuscript from the published version.¹⁶

As the number of texts grew, usage of the MCP has also grown exponentially. It is now used not only to investigate specific terms or to study the use of language in a specific text,¹⁷ but is also enabling thematic studies across the spectrum of Malay literature, for example on references to the *hajj* pilgrimage from Southeast Asia,¹⁸ or on finance and taxes in the Malay world,¹⁹ or on depictions of anger in Malay texts.²⁰ In the second part of this paper, I

would like to demonstrate the usage of the MCP for one particular thematic study, of the traditional Malay vocabulary for the illumination of manuscript books and letters. As can be seen, the MCP enables the compilation of a body of references in the course of one evening which might otherwise have taken a scholarly life-time to collect.

Ian's legendary modesty is reflected in the front page of the MCP, which bears no clue to its authorship, with the name 'Ian Proudfoot' simply tucked alphabetically into the list of contributors of texts. But for many years, the front page of the MCP carried the message 'Any problems, contact me', with a link to Ian's e-mail address. I was moved beyond measure when I realized soon after his death that the message was no longer there, and that Ian must have removed it shortly before he died. Like a good captain, Ian had first set the rudder and put everything in order, before leaving his ship to sail on without him.

THE LANGUAGE OF MALAY MANUSCRIPT ART

Illumination in Islamic manuscripts from Southeast Asia normally takes the form of decorated frames or headpieces marking the beginning or end of a text. Most commonly encountered are double decorated frames over two facing pages, symmetrical about the gutter of the book, filled with floral, foliate and occasionally geometric motifs, and with a palette centred on red, yellow and black and occasionally gold. The finest examples of double decorated frames tend to be found in manuscripts of the Qur'an and other Islamic texts written in Arabic, which often also bear illuminated marginal ornaments. Some of the most lavish examples of Malay manuscript art are found in royal letters, which may be adorned with delicate gold borders and with scattered floral motifs across the surface of the paper.

The few lines above hint at the basic repertoire of descriptive terms in English for illumination in Islamic manuscripts. Discussing these topics in Malay or Indonesian I have used, amongst others, the terms *iluminasi*, *seni hias manuskrip* or *unsur hiasan dalam naskah*, while illuminated frames are termed *bingkai berhias*, decorated headpieces *kepala berhias* and marginal ornaments *hiasan pinggir*. Whilst descriptive and acceptable for contemporary scholarly discourse, all are also

essentially unsatisfactory at one level in employing vocabulary so obviously alien to the artists who created these manuscripts, which mostly date from the 17th through to the late 19th centuries.

When in 1991 I worked with Ben Arps on the bilingual book *Golden Letters: Writing Traditions of Indonesia*,²¹ we tried to find an indigenous Indonesian term for 'illumination', and settled on Ben's elegant suggestion of the Javanese-derived *seni sungging*. In the long term, however, I realised that this term did not resonate with and was not fully understood in non-Javanese speaking parts of the Malay world. And yet few viable alternatives have since emerged. Other recent publications in the field include Mu'jizah's doctoral dissertation on illuminated Malay letters, published as *Iluminasi dalam Surat-surat Melayu Abad ke-18 dan ke-19* (Mu'jizah 2009). Dzul Haimi Md. Zain's study of illuminated Qur'an manuscripts is entitled *Ragam Hias al-Qur'an di Alam Melayu* (2007). Dzul Haimi's doctoral research was on Safavid illumination, and he thus naturally gravitates towards the Arabic term *tazhib* for 'illumination' and *muzahhib* for 'illuminator' (Dzul Haimi 2007: 13, 23). While certainly more appropriate for the Islamic book arts of Southeast Asia than forms of the Latin-derived 'illuminasi', it must also be acknowledged that these Arabic terms never entered the Malay lexicon, either in classical texts or in contemporary usage.

Unlike some of their Arabic, Persian and Turkish counterparts, Malay book illuminators did not sign their wares, and in doing so, provide valuable information on the nomenclature of their role. There is only one possible example of the signature of a Malay manuscript artist that I am aware of: MS 139a, *Hikayat Carang Kulina*, in the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kuala Lumpur, opens with an attractive double decorated frame with headpieces (Photo 2). On each of the two facing pages, the two vertical borders are extended upwards, to flank the triangular arched headpiece. At the tip of all four 'pillars', the foliate decoration stops to make room for a tiny inscription: *Megat Anum empunya*, 'Megat Anum is the owner' (Photo 3). Although this may be the name of the owner of the book rather than that of the artist, the intimate and subtle intertwining of decoration and name does tend to suggest that the owner and artist were the same person.



Photo 2. *Hikayat Carang Kulina*, initial decorated frames with double headpiece

Source: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, MS 139a.



Photo 3. *Hikayat Carang Kulina*, detail of tip of illuminated column, with the name of the owner of the manuscript: *Megat Anum empunya*, 'Megat Anum is the owner'

Source: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, MS 139a (detail)

Be that as it may, this example does not materially advance our search for Malay terms for book illumination, nor are there many western sources which mention the decoration of books or letters. Our only potential sources for the traditional vocabulary of Malay manuscript art are therefore Malay texts themselves, in the hope of coming across references to painting, drawing and decorating on paper, from which we might learn how these tasks were described in Malay. Yet these references are far and few between: in some two decades of studying Malay manuscript art, I was only aware of a few such nuggets, mainly from that rich source of scenes of Malay life, the autobiography of Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir. But with the revolutionary search opportunities offered by the Malay Concordance Project, searches on all available texts were performed with keywords associated with the arts

of the book, such as *lukis*, *hias*, *kertas*, *kitab*, *gambar*, *emas*, *seni*, *warna*, etc. This led swiftly to a number of passages in Malay texts describing drawing and painting, which in turn led to the identification of further significant terms.

The survey below is grouped by types of decoration: illumination in books; drawings on paper; illuminated letters and all forms of decorative writing; and finally, decoration on other materials. Apart from the excerpts from the writings of Abdullah and dictionary definitions, all quotations were identified through the Malay Concordance Project,²² and the appropriate text editions were then consulted. Where possible, citations are given from text editions, but where the text was only accessible to me via the Malay Concordance Project, the MCP reference is given. In all cases full translations into English are given, not only to indicate the particular meaning implied in a certain term, but also to highlight the difference in meaning of certain Malay words in earlier periods. The most relevant phrases in each passage, both in the original Malay and in English translation, are underlined for emphasis.

Illuminated Manuscript Books: *Kitab Keemasan*

Only two references in Malay texts to the illumination of manuscript books have been found. The first is in the *Hikayat Iskandar Zulkarnain*:

Hatta dengan suatu pernaungan, dihampirinya serta dengan hamparan yang keemasan daripada sutera yang merah dan dihantarnya di atas segala kerusi daripada perak bertatahkan ratna mutu manikam dan dibukanya segala kitabnya sekalian keemasan. (MCP Isk 237).

Under the shelter he rolled out golden carpets inlaid with red silk, and on these he placed chairs of silver studded with all sorts of precious jewels, and he took out his books which were all illuminated with gold.

The second reference is to an illuminated Qur'an manuscript placed on top of a golden cushion on the grave of Sultan Iskandar Thani of Aceh, who died in 1641, as described by Nuruddin al-Raniri in the *Bustan al-Salatin*:

Di atasnya itu suatu masyaf wakaf bersura²³ air emas dalamnya itu. (Siti Hawa 1992: 61)

On top of it was placed an endowed copy of the Qur'an, written in gold ink.

Drawing Patterns and Designs: *Menulis Bunga-bunga*

In the *Hikayat Abdullah*, Munsyi Abdullah describes how he learnt to draw as a youth in Melaka, in order to sell more kites than any of his competitors:

Maka adalah waktu tengah hari, lepas2 mengaji itu, aku perbuat layang2 lidi kecil, kujual kepada budak2 satu seduit harganya. Maka itulah menjadi belanjaku, membeli panganan dan buah2. Adapun daripada layang2 itulah asalnya aku tahu menulis bunga2 dan gambar2, karena pada masa itu aku biasakan tanganku dan kuperhatikan barang2 dimana kulihat orang2 Cina membuat gambar2 dan bunga2, maka aku tuliskan kepada layang2. Maka ada juga orang lain2 pun membuat layang2 dijualnya, tetapi budak2 tiada suka membeli karena bunga2nya itu dibubuhnya kertas merah dan hijau hitam, ditampalnya. Adapun aku membuat itu semuanya putih juga, tetapi ada kusediakan dawat warna2. Maka datang seorang budak hendak membeli itu, kutanya: 'Apa engkau mau bunganya?' Maka katanya: 'Sahaya mau gajah.' Dan kata seorang: 'Sahaya mau burung.' Dan kata seorang: 'Sahaya mau ikan.' Maka barang kehendaknya kutuliskan; itulah sebabnya budak2 terlalu suka membeli kepadaku. (Sweeney 2008: 257-8)

At midday, after Qur'an recitation lessons, I would make small kites which I would sell to children for a *duit* each. That is how I earned pocket money to spend on snacks and fruit. It was from making these kites that I first learned to draw patterns and pictures, for it was then that I first trained my hand by watching closely whenever I saw the Chinese drawing pictures and patterns, and I would then draw these onto kites. Other people also made kites for sale, but the children didn't want to buy these because their designs were just made by sticking on bits of red, green and black paper. My kites started off all white, but I had ready all sorts of coloured inks. When a child came to buy a kite, I would ask him, 'what design do you want?'. He might say 'I want an elephant', and someone else would say, 'I want a bird', while another would say 'I want a fish'. Whatever they wanted I would draw for them, and that is why the children preferred to buy kites from me.

This anecdote indicates that the standard Malay verb 'to draw' was *tulis*, *menulis*. While *gambar* for 'picture' is still familiar today, *bunga* or *bunga-bunga* was used in a broader inclusive sense of

'pattern' or 'design'. This usage is also found in a letter from Abdullah in Singapore to Eduard Dulaurier in Paris in 1847:

Sahaya minta tolong kepada tuan jikalau ada kitab tauladan orang hendak belajar menulis bunga2 tolonglah tuan belikan, karena sahaya hendak membuat tauladan, dan lagi satu peti dawat2 berjenis2 warna membuat bunga2 adanya. (Gallop 1994: 228)

I would like to ask you to buy me a pattern book from which people can learn to draw designs, because I want some examples to copy, and also for a box of inks in various colours for decorating patterns.

Tulis is an indigenous Austronesian word, present in Old Javanese where its meaning was 'painting, drawing; writing, letter' (Zoetmulder 1982). In his Jawi dictionary of 1903, Wilkinson defines *tulis* as 'Writing; painting; the representation of characters, figures or patterns upon any surface by means of paint, dye or ink – as distinct from carving, inlaying or engraving' (Wilkinson 1985: 202). In the revised romanised form of his dictionary published three decades later, he gives a more precisely nuanced definition of *tulis*: 'delineating in contrasted colour, e.g in paint, dye or ink, in contr. to carving, inlaying, engraving, embroidery, etc; writing (Wilkinson 1932: 608). This dual usage is confirmed by Raja Ali Haji, in his great unfinished dictionary *Kitab Pengetahuan Bahasa* compiled in 1857:

Tulis, iaitu seseorang menurunkan sesuatu kepada sesuatu sama ada dengan dawat atau lainnya adalah yang ditulisnya itu surat2kah atau rupa bunga2an bernamalah tulis (Ali Haji 1997: 333).

Tulis refers to someone inscribing something onto something, whether with ink or another medium; the act of inscribing, whether letters or various kinds of patterns, is called *tulis*.

One of the most important episodes in Malay literature where artistic talent plays a key role is in the *Sulalat al-Salatin*, when Hang Nadim bests the textile designers of Kalinga by drawing a design beyond compare.

Maka kata Hang Nadim, 'Marilah peta dengan dawat itu.' Maka segera diberikan oleh Keling itu peta dan dawat pada Hang Nadim. Maka oleh Hang Nadim ditulisnya pada kertas bunga yang seperti kehendak hatinya itu. Setelah dilihat oleh segala penulis Keling yang banyak, maka sekaliannya hairan tercengang,

melihat kelakuan tangan Hang Nadim menulis itu. Telah sudah, oleh Hang Nadim ditunjukkannya pada segala pandai menulis yang banyak itu, katanya, 'Demikianlah bunga yang hamba kehendaki.' (A. Samad 1986: 218-9).

So Hang Nadim said, 'Bring me paper and ink.' So the Kelings gave him paper and ink, and Hang Nadim drew on the paper the motifs he had in mind. As all the Keling designers watched him, they were astonished at his skill in drawing. When Hang Nadim had finished, he showed his work to the artists saying, 'These are the patterns I want.'

Here too the key verb is *tulis*, while also notable are the terms *penulis* and *pandai menulis* (akin to *pandai besi*, 'blacksmith', and *pandai emas*, 'goldsmith') for the artists/designers who drew the designs. In this episode, another important word is introduced: *peta*. In the first line, *peta* is also used synonymously with *kertas* to mean the paper support for a drawing, but here and in other traditional Malay texts *peta* is a standard term for picture or drawing, and it is also used as a verb.

Portraits and paintings: *peta dan gambar*

There are numerous references in Malay texts to pictures and portraits, which are very often the means by which a prince or princess first glimpses the beloved. This is rather ironic given that there are practically no known early Malay drawings on paper depicting people or landscape scenes. Thus these literary elements probably reflect the strong influence of stories from Iran and India, with their rich traditions of manuscript painting. In Malay texts, a picture is *gambar* or *peta*, while the verb 'to draw' is usually based on *tulis* but occasionally on *peta*.

In *Hikayat Seri Rama*, Sita Dewi is tricked by her sister-in-law Kikuwi Dewi into drawing a portrait of Rawana on a fan, which Kikuwi Dewi then places on her chest as she sleeps, to be discovered by Seri Rama.

Maka kata Kikuwi Dewi, "Tuan putri, tuliskan apalah pada kipas ini; sahaya hendak melihat rupa baginda itu." Maka oleh Sita Dewi dituliskannya pada kipas itu tatkala maharaja Rawana memberi titah. (Ikram 1980: 302)

Kikuwi Dewi asked, 'My lady, please draw on this fan, I really want to see what he looks like.' So Sita Dewi drew on the fan Maharaja Rawana giving an order.

In the 14th-century text *Hikayat Bayan Budiman*, the term *peta* is used synonymously with *gambar* for 'picture', as in when the king is given a picture of a beautiful girl:

Maka apabila disambut oleh baginda itu, maka titah baginda itu, 'Inilah rupanya puteri yang aku mimpikan itu.' Maka segera disambut baginda gambar itu lalu dipeluk diciumnya akan peta itu, seperti Laila dengan Majnun rupanya. Maka sembah Perdana Menteri, 'Patik pohonkan dahulu peta itu.' Maka titah baginda, 'Aku tiada dapat bercerai dengan dia, buah hati cahaya mataku.' Maka oleh Perdana Menteri itu ditulisnya pula suatu lagi seperti peta itu. Maka ia pun masuk mengadap lalu bermohon kepada baginda akan hendak pergi mencari puteri itu. (MCP Bayan 98).

When the king was presented with the picture, he said, 'This is the face of the princess I have been dreaming of.' He took the picture and grasped it and kissed the portrait, just like Laila and Majnun. The Prime Minister said, 'Please may I have the picture', but the king replied, 'I can't part with it, the delight of my eyes.' So the Prime Minister drew another copy of the picture.

The Prime Minister takes this picture down to the harbour and asks the captains of all the foreign vessels if they recognize the princess, and finally one captain identifies her as the daughter of the ruler of Rum (Turkey). So he goes in search of her, and eventually tracks her down. The princess's maid reports the arrival of a foreign artist:

'... ada seorang laki-laki muda belia terlalu baik parasnya serta dengan bijaksana dan pandai ia menulis. Maka inilah tulisannya diberikannya kepada patik.' Maka peta itu pun dipersembahkan dayang-dayang kepada Tuan Puteri itu. Maka oleh Tuan Puteri dilihatnya peta itu terlalulah baik rupanya: Maka titah Tuan Puteri itu, 'Panggilkan aku orang muda itu, hendak kusuruh ia menulis suatu gambar.' ... Maka disuruh oleh Tuan Puteri menulis suatu peta. Maka ditulis oleh Perdana Menteri sebuah bukit dengan sungai sekali, syahdan di kaki bukit itu ditulisnya rusa laki-bini dan anaknya seekor kecil. (MCP Bayan 102-3).

'There is a handsome and well-bred young man who is a fine artist, and he gave me this drawing of his.' The maids presented the picture to the princess. The princess saw what a fine picture it was, and said, 'Call the young man to me, I want to ask him to draw a picture.' ... The princess then asked him to draw a picture. So the Prime

Minister drew a hill with rivers wending down, and at the foot of the hill he drew a pair of deer with their young fawn.

In the 16th-century *Hikayat Inderaputera*, both *peta* and *gambar* are also used:

Sebermula sehari-hari tuan putri Tulela Maduratna duduk di atas mercu maligainya dengan peta rupa gambar Indraputra itu melihat orang berjalan lalu lalang, kalau ada yang serupa dengan peta itu. (Mulyadi 1983: 116)

All day long, princess Tulela Maduratna sat on her covered dais with her portrait of Indraputra, looking at all the people passing by, in case any of them matched the picture.

In these examples, *peta* is used not only for a portrait of a person but also for a more general picture of a landscape scene. In the *Hikayat Iskandar Zulkarnain*, the verbal form *terpeta* for ‘drawn’ is found:

Maka Raja Iskandar mengambil kertas, dibukanya dilihatnya rupa dirinya terpeta dalam kertas itu. (MCP Isk 242)

Raja Iskandar took the paper and opened it, and saw a picture of himself drawn on the paper.

Another verbal form of *peta* occurs in quite a number of texts in the stock phrase evoking bodily beauty, *bagai gambar baharu dipeta*, ‘like a picture newly drawn’, equivalent to the English phrase ‘as pretty as a picture’. This is found in *Syair Ken Tambuhan* (MCP KT 66) and in the *Syair Kunjungun Tengku Selangor* (MCP KTS 12), and with *laksana* or *seperti* instead of *bagai* in the later *Syair Sultan Nur Peri* (MCP NurP 58), *Syair Burung Pungguk* (MCP Pung 5) and *Syair Nuri dengan Simbangan* (MCP Nuri 7, 10). There are numerous other instances, especially in *syair* dating from the second half of the 19th century. According to Wilkinson, *peta* originates from the Sanskrit *patta*, and means ‘a sketch-plan, a design, a drawing, a portrait or pictured representation; to draw, delineate or design. *Gambar itu beharu di-peta*, that picture is newly drawn; Ht. Ind. Nata’ (Wilkinson 1985: 453).

A different verb, *reka*, is found in *Syair Siti*, in the parallel simile *laksana gambar baharu direka*, ‘like a picture newly composed’ (MCP SSiti 237), while *Syair Sinyor Kosta* has *bagai gambar reka* (MCP Kosta 51, 351). Wilkinson gives the derivation of *reka* from the Sanskrit *rekha*, and defines it ‘Composition; stringing together’, equivalent to

karang, with ‘*Rekaan*: a thing composed; a narrative or tale’ (Wilkinson 1985: 353). While the dictionary definitions primarily apply *reka* to literary compositions, the valuable compendium of Malay sciences and craft techniques, *Adat raja-raja Melayu*, also applies it to the composing of patterns to adorn a keris or other weapons:

Maka salut bubuk dahulu dengan lilin. Maka direkalah, yakni bunga atau awan-awan atau lainnya, mana sekehendak kita (Sudjiman 1996: 151)

First cover it with a layer of wax, and then sketch out the design, whether of floral or other motifs, to your liking

Illuminated letters: *tulisan air emas*

Probably the most famous textual reference to the illumination of a Malay letter is from the *Hikayat Abdullah*, in the well-known episode concerning the letter from the king of Siam. Abdullah recounts how he was set the difficult task by Raffles of preparing an appropriate response to a perceived diplomatic snub in a letter received from the king of Siam. Abdullah worked until midnight to complete the letter:

... maka surat itu pun sudahlah serta dengan kandang2nya dan jidarnya semuanya air emas belaka. Maka kelihatan rupanya surat kiriman itu gemerlapan serta berkilat2. Maka belumlah pernah kudapati sampai sekarang ini surat yang mulia serta elok rupanya seperti itu. (Sweeney 2008: 411)

... the letter was finally finished, with all its compartments and borders completely illuminated with gold ink. The letter seemed to gleam and glitter. To this day, I have never seen a letter as fine and beautiful as that one.

The next day, Abdullah showed the letter to Raffles, who said:

‘Terlalu bagus rupa tulisan air emas; inikah surat Raja Siam itu?’ (Sweeney 2008: 411)

‘The illumination is exceptionally fine; is this the letter for the king of Siam?’

The two terms Abdullah uses for the constituent elements of the decoration are *kandang* and *jidar*, which I have translated as ‘compartment’ and ‘border’. Some of the most elaborate royal letters were produced in the kingdom of Johor-Riau, and in most of these the decoration is set in different compartments, each edged with a border. For

example a letter from the Yang Dipertuan Muda of Riau of 1820 has a decorated ruled border of gold ornaments edged in black ink around the outer edge of the sheet of paper, and further illuminated borders within the sheet which demarcate separate compartments for the seal, the heading, the text of the letter and the *termaktub* or closing lines (Gallop 1994: 40). But how widespread was the use of these terms in the context of Malay decorative arts?

The main meaning of *kandang* is an enclosure for animals, but it can also be ‘the inner circle, ring or square, about the bull’s eye in a target’ (Wilkinson 1985: 540). Searching through texts on the MCP, *kandang* is overwhelmingly used for animal enclosures, but in Aceh and related areas it also means ‘grave’ or ‘graveyard’. It is hardly used in the context of small physical compartments.

Jidar is given in Wilkinson’s dictionary as deriving from the Arabic *jidâr*, meaning ‘wall’ (Steingass 1993: 222): ‘The “walls” within which type is confined; the lines which appear round a page of printed matter in some books; lines ruled round a letter; Ht. Abd., 273’ (Wilkinson 1985: 240), and thus referring to the selfsame source as quoted above. Rechecking *jidar* on the MCP reveals that this is a very rare word in Malay texts. Apart from its use in the *Hikayat Abdullah* only three other occurrences of *jidar* are noted, all being in Abdul Rauf’s *Tarjuman al-mustafid*, in the commentary on *Surat al-Kahf*, and all in the original Arabic meaning of a physical ‘wall’ (MCP TM Kahf 77, 82). Thus while Abdullah’s terminology is both elegant and suitably descriptive for illuminated royal Malay letters, it is not clear if it was ever widespread Malay usage, or whether it reflects his ingenious use of language.

There are a number of other references in Malay texts to illuminated royal letters, most prominently in the *Hikayat Iskandar Zulkarnain*. On seven occasions in the text²⁴ Nabi Khidir writes a letter on behalf of Raja Iskandar on golden paper with silver ink.

Maka disambut raja surat itu dilihatnya berbungkus dari bab tenun Rumi dan kertas emas bersurat dengan dakwat perak. (MCP Isk 121)

When the king received the letter, he saw it was wrapped in woven Turkish cloth, and was written on golden paper with silver ink.

That Nabi Khidir is writing on ready-decorated sheets of paper, rather than paper specially illuminated on the occasion of the writing of a letter

(as in the case of Abdullah’s letter), is clear from this example when Raja Iskandar has instructed Nabi Khidir to write a letter to Raja Abud:

Maka Nabi Khidir pun memohon kepada Raja Iskandar kembali kepada khemahnya, disuruhnya tempat kertas emas. Maka disuratnya dengan dakwat perak demikian bunyinya, “Ini surat dengan nama Allah ...” (MCP Isk 148)

So Nabi Khidir took leave of Raja Iskandar to return to his tent, where he ordered the container of illuminated paper [to be brought to him]. He wrote in silver ink the following words, “This letter, in the name of God ...”

On another occasion he ‘took a piece of golden paper, and wrote in silver ink’ (*Maka Nabi Khidir pun mengambil kertas emas, maka disuratnya dengan dakwat perak* (MCP Isk 76)).

Just as Abdullah’s reference to ‘compartments’ and ‘borders’ evoked a particular style of illuminated Malay letter, so too does the reference to sheets of ‘golden paper’. Many royal letters from India were written on ready-decorated sheets of paper, sprinkled with gold or silver droplets, with borders around the edge and flower motifs scattered across the whole sheet. Such gilded sheets were particularly associated with the port of Surat in Gujerat, and were sometimes referred to as ‘Surat’ paper. Gilded ‘Surat’ paper was also exported to Southeast Asia, and was used both by the Dutch East India Company and local Indonesian rulers for royal letters (Gallop & Akbar 2006: 122).

Chrysography: tersurat dengan air emas

In some of the references above, it is specified that the writing was in silver ink. Chrysography, or writing in metallic ink, is a de luxe practice known in many parts of the Islamic world, one of the most spectacular examples being the seven-volume Qur’an of the Mamluk Sultan Baybars, written in Cairo between the years 1304 and 1306, entirely in gold ink (Baker 2007: 43-51). In the Malay world, no manuscripts are known written in silver ink, but two more recent letters written in gold ink have been recorded. One is a letter from Daing Temenggung Ibrahim of Johor in 1856, while the other is an early 20th-century letter from Selangor.²⁵ In the *Bustan al-Salatin*, in addition to the Qur’an mentioned earlier, there are two references to writing in gold ink:

maka diunjukkannya suatu kertas tersurat dalamnya dengan air mas demikian bunyinya 'Jangan kaupilih yang fana daripada yang baka ...' (MCP BS.R 4/1,27)

then he showed him a sheet of paper written with gold ink, which said, 'Don't choose the transient instead of the eternal ...'

Lalu dititahkan Raja Kastasab menyuratkan syair ini dengan air daun emas. Setelah sudah disurat maka dibubuhnya gantungan pada tiap kota negeri itu. (MCP BS.M 3/2:487)

Raja Kastasab ordered the poem to be written out in gold ink. When it was completed he ordered [copies] to be hung on each fort in the kingdom.

In both these examples, the verb 'to write' is from *surat*. Checking on the MCP confirms that while *tulis* can mean drawing and writing, *surat* is used exclusively for writing. Thus the two examples above indubitably refer to text written in gold ink, rather than to gold ornamentation.

In the *Syair Bidasari*, the king orders the prime minister to write a letter to Raja Kembayat, which is written in gold ink:

*Demilah didengar menteri berida / Mengambil sekeping kertas Ulanda
Duduk mengarang lakunya syahada / Khatnya wadih hurufnya beperada (MCP Bid 215)*

When the youthful²⁶ minister heard him / He took a sheet of Dutch paper
Sat down and wrote, his bearing noble / His handwriting was clear, the letters golden

Perada is also used for gold in the *Syair Siti Zubaidah*, to describe an illuminated prayer (or prayerbook) from Turkey:

*Bertudung kasa kain Wilanda / Berbunga emas tepi berenda
memegang salawat tersurat perada / Dari Istambul dibagikan ayahanda (MCP Zub 142)*

Wearing a veil of Dutch muslin / With a gold pattern and lace border
Clutching a prayer written in gold / From Istanbul, a gift from father

In the *Syair Bunga Air Mawar*, the ink is said to 'shine':

*Surat dibuka dari lipatan / Nyatalah dakwatnya berkilatan
Sangatlah cantik rupa suratan / Bahunya harum bukan buatan (MCP Mwr 9r)*

The letter was taken out of its envelope / Its shining ink caught the eye
Its writing was exceptionally fine / Its fragrance beyond compare

This could of course refer to gold or silver ink, but another possibility to be borne in mind is the presence of glitter in the ink. This decorative feature can be seen in royal letters from Palembang sent to T.S.Raffles,²⁷ and was also an artistic device used in Ottoman and Persian letters to highlight important elements of text.

Writing on tablets of gold and silver: *luh emas dan perak*

In the episodes of *Hikayat Iskandar Zulkarnain* referred to above, we have interpreted *kertas emas* as gilded paper. Another version of the *Hikayat Iskandar Zulkarnain*,²⁸ however, suggests a different kind of 'golden letter'. In the same episode as is quoted above concerning the letter to Raja Abud, this manuscript (PNRI MS W.113) has the following:

Maka sabda Nabi Allah Hidir pun kembalilah kepada kemahnya itu. Syahdan maka disuruhnya tempa/h,²⁹ kertas emas, setelah sudah maka disuruhnya surat dengan da'awat perak, demikian bunyinya itu: (hal. 254) "Dengan nama Allah ..." (Noegraha 2002: 178)

So said the Prophet of God Hidir, who then returned to his tent. He ordered a sheet of gold to be hammered out, and when it was ready he ordered to be written with silver ink the following words, "In the name of God ..."

This reading hinges mainly on the final letter of the word *tempa/h*, but in at least one other episode of this *hikayat* a letter from Raja Iskandar to Raja Ghidakah is certainly written on a sheet of gold:

Maka disuruh Raja Iskandar Nabi Khidir menyuratkan surat. Maka Nabi Khidir suruh memberi seketi emas akan raja. Setelah sudah, maka disurat oleh Nabi Khidir dengan dakwat perak, pertama disuratnya pujian-pujian akan Allah Taala. (MCP Isk 210)

Raja Iskandar instructed Nabi Khidir to write the letter. So Nabi Khidir ordered one hundred thousand [measures]³⁰ of gold to be brought to the king. When it was ready, Nabi Khidir wrote in silver ink, starting with praises to God the Exalted.

Raja Ghidakah received the letter:

Maka dilihat Raja Ghidakah surat itu, dalam loh emas. (MCP Isk 241)

Raja Ghidakah looked at the letter, on a tablet of gold.

There are many other references in Malay texts to documents inscribed on a sheet or tablet of gold, and of course the word *luh* had powerful resonances, recalling the *lawh mahfuz*, ‘the well-guarded tablet’ of the Qur’an (Q. 85:22). In the *Surat al-Anbiya*, a holy man (*wali*) shows Nabi Ibrahim the body of a great king, resting on a fort in a cave under the sea, with a plaque decrying all his past glories which were of no use now he was dead:

Maka ada kepada pihak kepalanya itu suatu luh daripada emas tersurat air dakwatnya daripada perak, demikian bunyinya: “Bahawa aku ini seorang raja yang amat besar ...” (Hamdan 1990: 301).

By his head was a tablet of gold on which was written in silver ink the following words: “I was a great king ...”

The *Hikayat Raja Damsyik* features a similar golden tablet written in silver ink, on which Syah Firman has written about the princess:

Maka dilihatnya ada suatu luh emas tergantung di dalam mahligai itu. Maka diambil oleh tuan puteri. Air dawatnya daripada perak. Maka lalu dibacanya oleh tuan puteri, maka tuan puteri pun menangis. (MCP DmsyH 919).

She saw a gold tablet hanging in the palace, and took it. The ink was of silver. The princess read the inscription, and cried.

In the *Hikayat Indraputra*, a gold tablet is inscribed with lapis lazuli:

Maka dilihat Indraputra ada suatu luh emas, maka disurat dengan lazuardi. Maka dibaca oleh Indraputra surat itu daripada bahasa jin akan peri kematian Raja Bahrum Tabut. (Mulyadi 1993: 148)

Indraputra saw a golden tablet, engraved with lapis lazuli. He read the inscription, which was written in the language of the jinns, about the death of Raja Bahrum Tabut.

On a more historical note, in the record book *Bo’ Sangaji Kai* of Bima, a royal command of 1650 is reproduced with an important annotation of its weight, which clarifies that in this case *kertas perak* does not mean a sheet of paper illuminated with silver,

but an actual sheet of silver (as is also hinted at by the use of the verb *bubuh* rather than *surat*):

Adapun hal surat ini dibubuh di dalam kertas perak. Adapun beratnya sekati dua ta[h]il, demikianlah adanya. (Chambert-Loir & Salahuddin 1999: 124)

This letter was inscribed on a sheet of silver, weighing one *kati* two *tahil*.

This example recalls the *piagam* or royal decrees issued by the court of Palembang to chiefs in south Sumatra, which were also inscribed on sheets of silver. After the capture of Palembang by the Dutch in 1821, the Dutch continued this custom.³¹

The *Hikayat Hang Tuah* ends with a reference to a peace treaty between Johor and the Dutch engraved on a sheet of gold:

Maka janji itu disuruh taruh oleh raja Johor, ditempanya emas, dititiknya seperti kertas. Maka kertas emas itulah dipahat suratnya janji itu. Setelah sudah maka dipahat pula cap tanda raja Johor suatu dan dipahat cap tanda orang besar-besar Wolanda suatu. Maka surat itu pun datang kepada Datuk Paduka Raja Johor ada menaruh surat pada kertas emas itu. (Kassim 1997: 547)

So the ruler of Johor ordered the agreement to be set down, and a sheet of gold was beaten, which could be pricked and inscribed as if it was paper. So the sheet of gold was engraved with the peace agreement. After that it was also engraved with the image of the seal of the king of Johor and also of the seal of the Dutch dignitaries. This document was passed to the Datuk Paduka Raja Johor, in whose safekeeping the letter on the sheet of gold is held.

Although no such treaty between Johor and the Dutch has been documented today, its format is well within the realms of possibility: a letter in Balinese from two Balinese princes to the Dutch governor of Semarang in 1768 was written on a palm-leaf shaped sheet of gold (Gallop & Arps 1991: 104).

Decorations in gold: *tulis air emas dan tulis perada*

Compared to the few descriptions of the decoration of written materials, Malay texts are much richer in references to gold ornamentation on objects made of a variety of media, including paper, wood, stone and cloth, as well as on larger constructions such as palaces and boats. For example, the *Bustan al-*

Salatin is full of descriptions of the richness of the architectural features in Iskandar Thani's palace:

Dan ada sebuah lagi balai, sekalian pegawainya bercat air emas yang merah, bergelar Balai Keemasan (Siti Hawa 1992: 31)

There was another hall, with all its pillars painted reddish gold, called the Golden Hall.

In Iskandar Thani's mausoleum, surrounding the grave was a stone ledge, and above it:

diperbuatnya kisi larikan atas angin bercat lagi bertulis lazuardi berair emas (Siti Hawa 1992: 59)

was a lattice painted with lapis lazuli traceried with liquid gold

In this case, the use of the two verbs *bercat* *lagi bertulis* suggests a differentiation, with the first, *bercat*, 'painted', indicating the coverage of large surfaces with colour, with *bertulis* evoking thin and delicate lineal decoration. The grave itself (*kandang*) was draped with layers of rich cloths:

dan lapis yang keempat daripada zarzari, bersurat kalimah. Sekalian suratan itu air emas berukir, berumbai-umbaikan permata bercampur mutiara dikarang, perbuatan Dar al-Salam (Siti Hawa 1992: 59)

and the fourth layer was of *zarzari* cloth covered with calligraphy embroidered in gold, and adorned with precious stones and strings of pearls, made in the Abode of Peace [i.e. Aceh]

In the *Ceretera kapal asap*, Abdullah's account of the steamship *Sesostris* which visited Singapore in 1841, he describes the splendour of the captain's cabin:

Maka keliling bilik itu bertulis bunga2 air emas (Sweeney 2006: 276)

The walls of the cabin were decorated with gilded motifs.

In the *Tuhfat al-Nafis*, it is the warships themselves that are gilded:

Yang Dipertuan Muda Raja Jaafar itu suka membuat penjajab perang yang indah-indah perbuatannya dengan diukir dan ditulis dengan air emas²² (Hooker 1998: 332)

Yang Dipertuan Muda Raja Jaafar took pleasure from the construction of a warship of beautiful workmanship, carved and with decorations in gold (cf. Matheson & Andaya 1982: 221)

Most of these decorations are drawn (*bertulis/ditulis*) with *air emas*, gold ink made by dissolving pounded gold leaf in a water-solution.³³ Another term also used as a descriptor of gilded decorations is *perada*, used both as a noun and a verb, as found in the *Adat raja-raja Melayu* to describe the bathing place called *panca persada* built by Tun Narawangsa:

balai gading dilarik segala kisi-kisinya, disendi segala tiangnya diperada dengan air emas diseling-seling dengan perak, ditulis dengan segala jenis bunga dan buah yang indah-indah, dicat dengan segala warna diseling-seling dengan air emas, lengkap dengan perhiasannya (Sudjiman 1996: 69).

an ivory pavilion with finely-carved latticework, the bases and joints of all the pillars traceried with liquid gold interspersed with silver, with all sorts of patterns of beautiful flowers and fruits, painted in various colours highlighted with gold, together with all the other usual decorations.

Perada is especially common in the romantic *syair* which proliferated in the 19th century, with their keen eye for the luxuries of palace life. In the *Syair Ken Tambuhan*:

Raden pun naik ke atas kuda , Berpayung kertas tulis perada Diiringkan kedayan yang muda-muda, Langsung mengadap paduka ayahanda (Teeuw 1966: 53)

Raden mounted his horse, And shaded by a parasol with gold tracery Flanked by his young attendants, He came straight before his royal father

In the *Syair Engku Puteri*, the king commands his master craftsman Said Besar to build an *astakona*, a three-storied wooden octagonal pavilion, and to adorn it with flowers made from gilded paper:

Dialah dititahkan oleh baginda, Mengarang bunga astakona yang ada berbagai jenis kertas perada, Joran bercawang bunga Olanda (MCP EPut 196c)

It was he who was ordered by the king, To make flowers to decorate the octagonal pavilion, Made from all sorts of gilded paper, Dutch flowers on branched stems

Among the myriad occurrences of *perada* in the *Syair Siti Zubaidah* are

Naik ke balai tulisan perada (MCP Zub 75), Proceeded to the audience hall covered with gold patterns

Seorang mengembang akan payung perada (*ibid.* 76), Someone opened a parasol with gold tracery

Di atas kerusi tulis perada (*ibid.* 102), On a chair decorated with gilt motifs

Tombak lembing bersempang perada (*ibid.* 252), Spears and lances with gold tracery

Bersalin kain telepek perada (*ibid.* 266), Wearing cloth stamped with gold leaf

Bersandingan rupa perisai perada (*ibid.* 287), Sitting with shields inlaid with gold

Santap sirih di puan perada (*ibid.* 282), Chewing betel nut from a container inlaid with gold

And in the *Syair Damsyik*, by Haji Ibrahim of Riau:

Memakai pelana tulis perada (MCP Damsy.S 94), Wearing a saddle decorated with gold motifs

Bersandar di bantal awan perada (*ibid.* 488), Leaning on a cushion decorated with gold foil

Masuk selalu ke balai perada (*ibid.* 566), Going in and out of the hall adorned with gold leaf

Batang bertulis bunga perada (*ibid.* 1144), The spear shafts inlaid with patterns in gold

Di bawah khemah tulis perada (*ibid.* 1372), In a tent decorated with gold foil

Beselubung kain tulis perada (*ibid.* 1672), Veiled in cloth decorated with gold patterns

Mana yang kain telepek perada (*ibid.* 1414), Which is the cloth stamped with gold leaf

And *Syair Seratus Siti*:

Berbuatkan nisan tulis perada (MCP SSiti 48), Made a tombstone decorated with gold

Di bawah payung tulis perada (*ibid.* 79), Beneath a parasol with gold tracery

Santap sirih di puan perada (*ibid.* 116), Chewing betel nut from a container inlaid with gold

Memegang perisai tulis perada (*ibid.* 170), Holding a shield inlaid with gold

Masuk mahligai tulis perada (*ibid.* 185), Entered the palace decorated with gold leaf

Bersarung kaki perbuatan Jawi , Bertulis perada bunga jengawi (*ibid.* 189), Wearing Malay-made socks, Decorated in gold tinsel with *jengawi* flowers

The translations of *perada* given above have been influenced not only by the linguistic context but also by reference to artforms which can still be referenced today, notably cloth ornamented with gold (*kain perada* in Java and Bali, or *kain telepek* in the Malay peninsula), parasols embellished with gold foil still common in Bali, and the embroidered bed hangings of cloth and gold tinsel found in Malay areas. In the texts, *perada* seems to have been a descriptor for a wide range of gold ornamentation: some of the *syair* references above suggest patterns stamped in gold leaf or foil, others gold inlay on metal, while many others can only mean tracery in liquid gold.

Parada occurs in Old Javanese to mean ‘gold leaf’,³⁴ derived from the Sanskrit *pârada*, meaning ‘quicksilver’,³⁵ but appears in Old Javanese inscriptions later than *tulis mas*, which is noted in the late twelfth century:

‘Late in [the twelfth] century charters began to mention the term *tulis* (to draw a line) in connection with cloth decoration – a term still used in connection with free-hand *batik* decoration. In the twelfth century this term was, in fact, applied to at least two separate types of cloth decoration techniques. One was *tulis mas* (drawing in gold, later called *parada*), which refers to *prada*-style gilding or gold glue work of the type still produced in Bali. The other prominent type was *tulis warna* (drawing in colour), which probably refers to some sort of resist-dye technique. (Christie 1993: 11).

In Malay dictionaries, Winstedt (1959: 247), derives *perada* from the Sanskrit, and gives the meaning ‘gold or silver tinsel’. Wilkinson (1985: 455) has ‘Gold or silver leaf cut into patterns; tinsel; gold plate’, but in view of the attested Old Javanese usage he is surely erroneous in deriving *perada* from the Portuguese *prata*, which means ‘silver’. He was probably following Marsden (1984: 216), who gave a Portuguese origin for *prada*: ‘tinsel, leaf or thin plate of any metal. *Prada amas* gold leaf. *Prada besi* tinned iron plates. *De prada dangan ayer amas* gilt with liquid gold’.

CONCLUSION: DARI TULIS KE LUKIS

The traditional Malay verb for drawing was the indigenous word *tulis* (*menulis*, *ditulis*); derivatives of *peta* (*terpeta*, *dipeta*) were also used, while *reka* (*direka*) is found in the sense of composing a design.

Tulis could also mean ‘to write’, but the unambiguous verb for writing was *surat* (*menyurat*, *disurat*, *tersurat*) which was only ever used in association with letters. The term for pattern or motif or non-representational ornamentation in general was *bunga* (*bunga-bunga*, *bunga-bunga*) or *awan* or *mega*, all of which could also be used as qualifiers for specific patterns, such as *awan larat*, *awan Belanda*, etc. A portrait or picture was *peta* or *gambar*. The decorative frames and borders in illuminated letters were *jidar*, sometimes demarcated into compartments, *kandang*. An illuminated manuscript book could be described as *kitab keemasan*. To illuminate a book or letter with gold ink was *menulis dengan air emas* or *menulis dengan perada* or *diperada dengan air emas*, terms which could also be applied to the decoration of any artefact with gold ink or liquid gold.

But what about the glaring absence in traditional Malay texts of some of the artistic terms most commonly used today, preeminently *lukis*, the now-standard word for ‘to draw’? In the MCP, out of 154 Malay texts considered, *lukis* occurs precisely 21 times in only 9 texts – an astonishingly low number, compared to the 1370 instances of *tulis*. However, in each occurrence *lukis* does indeed have its present meaning of drawing. Wilkinson (1932:75) defines *lukis* as ‘to draw (esp. with pen, pencil or graver) in contr. to carving with a knife (*ukir*). Colouring or painting with colour is usually *tulis*.’ *Hias* has also retained its meaning of ‘decoration’ throughout time. *Seni*, on the other hand, is only used in classical Malay texts in a very precise sense of something being small or thin or fine or clear, rather than its current meaning of ‘art’, as in *seni lukis*, ‘painting’, *seni arca* ‘sculpture’, *seni Islam*, ‘Islamic art’, etc.

Regarding the traditional terms, there have been some major semantic shifts. *Tulis* nowadays predominantly refers to writing, although its use for drawing is still acknowledged in the *Kamus Dewan*: ‘1. mencatat kata-kata deng huruf dan memakai pena (*kalam dll*); 2. melahiran perasaan dgn catatan yang memakai huruf; 3. sl membuat gambar; menggambar; melukis; 4. membuat kain batik.’ (KD3 1994: 1483). *Peta* now only has the meaning of ‘map’, and in the *Kamus Dewan* seems to have completely lost its meaning of portrait or picture: ‘1. lukisan (*gambar*) pada kertas dll yang menunjukkan kedudukan negeri, sungai, gunung, dll. 2. lukisan (*gambar*) yang menunjukkan kedudukan bintang dll di langit.’ (KD3 1994: 1030).

These semantic shifts cannot be undone. Thus although the survey above indicates that the traditional term for illumination in Islamic manuscripts from the Malay world was *menulis dengan air emas* or *menulis dengan perada*, to use such terminology today would inevitably lead to an assumption of chrysography, writing text in gold ink, rather than drawing decorative patterns in gold ink, because of the inexorable change in the meaning of *tulis*. The equivalent contemporary phraseology would therefore have to be *melukis dengan air emas* or *melukis dengan perada*.

The aim of this discussion is not to be prescriptive, and the term *iluminasi* will no doubt continue to be used widely for its ease of reference. And yet a plea can be made for *perada*, which, with *emas*, continues to lend itself to contemporary usage (Photo 4). Thus we could suggest *manuskrip keemasan* or *manuskrip perada* for ‘illuminated manuscript(s)’ (or in Indonesia, *naskah perada*), *mushaf perada* for ‘illuminated Qur’an’, *surat emas*, *surat keemasan* or *surat perada* for ‘illuminated letters’; and *seni perada* for ‘illumination’.



Photo 4. Illuminated manuscript of the prayerbook *Dala'il al-khayrat* (*Manuskrip Dala'il al-khayrat diperada dengan air emas dan warna-warni*)

Source: Balai Kajian dan Pengembangan Budaya Melayu, Pulau Penyengat, Riau

In 2010, an exhibition of Islamic calligraphy was held in Jakarta, entitled *Dari Tulis ke Lukis*. In the opening article of the same title in the exhibition catalogue, Ali Akbar traced the path of Islamic calligraphy in Southeast Asia from the morass of individual hands seen in Southeast Asian Islamic manuscripts, in general untrammelled by the rules

laid down by the classical Arab calligraphers, to the beginnings of modern Islamic calligraphy, when from the 1960s onwards young Muslim artists in Indonesia began to incorporate Arabic calligraphy into their paintings on canvas (Akbar 2010: 5-6). It is striking that the phrase chosen to evoke this artistic journey could equally well describe the linguistic shift between the terms used in Malay texts to describe the action of pen on paper, but in this case to produce beautiful patterns rather than words.

END NOTES

- 1 An abridged version of this address was presented in Malay in the Bilik Majlis, Bangunan Canselor, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, on 25 September 2012. I would like to express my profound thanks to Dato' Zawayah Baba for initially extending an invitation to me to give a talk at ATMA (Institut Alam dan Tamadun Melayu), UKM. I would also like to thank Prof. Dr. Abdul Latif Samian for graciously hosting the event, and the staff and students of UKM for attending and for their stimulating questions and comments.
- 2 For an outline of Ian's career at the ANU, see the obituary by Virginia Hooker (2011).
- 3 Ian informed me that when in 1992 he first printed out the fruits of his work on early Malay printing, he simply had printed and bound a limited number of copies for distribution to the libraries in which he had conducted his research. It was Haji Ibrahim Ismail who suggested to Ian that the volume should be published, which led to the publication the following year by UM Library (Proudfoot 1993).
- 4 Pers. comm. from Nicholas Martland, who worked at the National Library of Singapore in the 1980s.
- 5 <http://mcp.anu.edu.au/N/PiagM_bib.html>.
- 6 I recall how Ian sought to rekindle the original evocations behind the personage now so iconic that his name is barely more than a label, by translating Hang Tuah as 'Yeoman Mettle'.
- 7 For a list of Ian's publications, see <<http://mcp.anu.edu.au/proudfoot/>>. One small item not included in that list is two catalogue entries for Malay manuscripts from the British Library included in an exhibition held in Lisbon about Macao, in which the pithy historical and literary analysis was provided by Proudfoot and the codicological descriptions by the present writer (Proudfoot & Gallop 2007).
- 8 See the links at the top of Ian's webpage: <<http://mcp.anu.edu.au/proudfoot/>>
- 9 <<http://mcp.anu.edu.au/proudfoot/EMPB/EMPB.htm>>
- 10 <<http://mcp.anu.edu.au/proudfoot/online.html>>
- 11 This paper has now been published as Gallop 2011.
- 12 At the time of his death, Ian was working on the *Tambo Kerintji*, a collection of texts from Kerinci collected by Petrus Voorhoeve in 1941, but written in Malay with many influences from Minangkabau and south Sumatran languages (Voorhoeve 1941).

- 13 Among the most important published Malay texts not in the MCP that come to mind are the *Adat Aceh* (Lamnyong 1976) and the *Silsilah raja-raja Berunai* (Sweeney 1968).
- 14 <<http://mcp.anu.edu.au/Q/texts.html>>.
- 15 See in particular the descriptions of *Hikayat Bayan Budiman* <http://mcp.anu.edu.au/N/Bayan_bib.html> and *Bustan al-Salatin* <http://mcp.anu.edu.au/N/BS_bib.html>.
- 16 See, for example, the description of *Asrar al-'Arifin* <http://mcp.anu.edu.au/N/AA_bib.html>.
- 17 Abdullah Hassan 2007.
- 18 Eric Tagliocozzo, forthcoming.
- 19 Denisova 2012.
- 20 Yudith 2012.
- 21 Gallop & Arps 1991.
- 22 In searching on the Malay Concordance Project, I generally excluded the early 20th-century newspaper editorials.
- 23 Iskandar (1966: 72) has *bersurat*
- 24 MCP Isk 76, 120, 121, 148, 151, 287, 322.
- 25 Both are discussed in Gallop (2006).
- 26 A definition of *berida* is given in the *Adat raja-raja Melayu: orang yang berida artinya, orang muda* (Sudjiman 1996: 155).
- 27 See examples in the British Library, Raffles Family Collection, MSS.Eur.D.742/1.
- 28 Noegraha 2002; based on an incomplete manuscript, W.113, in the Perpustakaan Nasional Republik Indonesia.
- 29 Although no critical apparatus is provided in this edition, by a comparison with other passages of text it appears that the word was written *tempah*, which the editor judged should be read *tempa*.
- 30 *Sa-keti*: one hundred thousand, a lakh (Wilkinson 1985: 504). Or perhaps *sekati*, one *kati* of gold, was meant?
- 31 One such decree issued by the Dutch in Palembang in 1825, in Malay in Jawi script, inscribed on a sheet of silver, in the held in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Schoemann V.48 (Asma 1992: 122-123).
- 32 In another manuscript of this text *emas* is replaced with *perada* (Hooker 1998: 534).
- 33 The *Adat raja-raja Melayu* contains three recipes for gold ink (*dakwat emas*), made from sheets of gold leaf (*perada*), honey solution (*air madu*), water, and natural adhesive (*getah maja*) (Sudjiman 1996: 149).
- 34 Zoetmulder 1982: 1278; also '*pinarada*, to put gold leaf, apply with gold leaf'; see also Jones 2007: 239.
- 35 The Sanskrit dictionary by Monier-Williams (1956: 620, col.1) gives for *pārada* (or *pārata*) 'quicksilver' (i.e. mercury); I am most grateful to Russell Jones for alerting me to this entry.

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