Aseasuk Conference 2012
Durham University
7th - 9th September
Panel abstract

Papers are invited on all aspects of the writing traditions of maritime Southeast Asia, from the present-day states of Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei, and the southern Muslim regions of Thailand, Cambodia and the Philippines. Topics may include the codicology of manuscripts, including studies on illumination, bindings, inks, calligraphy and palaeography; philological studies of texts in vernacular languages or in Arabic; and the overlap between manuscript studies and epigraphy, looking at inscriptions in wood, stone or metal.

On a more contemplative note, this will be the 7th and final session of the ‘Panel on Malay/Indonesian manuscript studies’ at an ASEASUK conference. Panels were held at the following ASEASUK conferences: Leeds 2003, Exeter 2005, Oxford 2006, Liverpool 2008, Swansea 2009, Cambridge 2011. The theme of the panel has always deliberately been kept broad.

PAPERS

The Jawi script of the Terengganu Inscription: a study on palaeography and orthography

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The Terengganu inscription has been considered to be the earliest document extant written in the Jawi script, making it perhaps the most important document for the study of the early development of the Jawi script. According to Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, it was written in 1303 AD. Several scholars have studied the script, mainly relating to dating and a few on the spelling system. In fact, a few books have been written relating to the matters concerned. Discussions on dating were quite exhaustive but on spelling system, some pertinent matters need to be reconsidered because the interpretations or opinions are not right. However, I believe none of them so far has really discussed the Terengganu Inscription from the perspective of palaeography, although a few of them did touch on the matter, perhaps inadvertently. This paper will focus on palaeography followed by new interpretations on several aspects of the spelling system.

A preliminary study of a traditional Malay manuscript, Silsilah Kerajaan Sambas dan Berunai

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One of the diverse traditional Malay manuscripts which has been preserved at the Department of Brunei History Centre is Silsilah Kerajaan Sambas dan Berunai (SKSB). This paper aims to launch a preliminary study of the manuscript of SKSB. The discussion will focus on the background and characteristics of the text, its contents and the genealogy of the sultans of Brunei and also those of Sambas. More particularly, I shall compare the structure of the Brunei royal genealogy found in the SKSB with that in the Silsilah Raja-Raja Berunai which was edited and published by Amin Sweeney in 1969. This paper will further examine whether: (1) the assumption and preliminary findings which point to the close relationship between Brunei and Sambas; and (2) the contents of the SKSB which have some similarities with those of Silsilah Raja-Raja Berunai indicate that both text were written by the same original author based on the same sources.

Historical Criticism in Malay Historiography from 16th to 19th century

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One of the main distinguished targets of historical texts is to describe the historical events from the certain point of view considered by the author as a true point of view. Malay historical chronicles considered by their readers and society as scientific works which contained the true information. These texts used to have some special elements to proof the truthfulness of the information. These elements may be divided into the following subjects:

Definitions and terms of historical sources research
Criticism regarding historical sources mentioned in text
Author's guidance on the aims and methods of the historical writing

The analysis of the Malay historical texts will help to identify the criteria of reliability which used by the author to verify the information and to convince the reader of the veracity of the reports. The textual analysis shows also that Malay Historiography from 16th to 19th century contains already some elements of historical criticism and historical sources research.

Rare Old Javanese manuscripts in the UK
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My presentation focuses on some early (pre-17th century) palm-leaf manuscripts (lontar and nipah) of West and East Javanese provenance kept in the Asian manuscript collections of the Cambridge UL, the Oxford Bodleian Library, and the British Library. Special attention will be devoted to the India Office Library collection of palm-leaf manuscripts (IOL Jav 53a to z) recovered by Lieut.Col. Mackenzie in East Java in the early 19th century. During my preliminary research, carried out in January and February 2012, I have identified some of the Old Javanese texts written on the manuscripts, i.e. the well-known Kakavin Arjunavivāha, the Parva Agastyaparva, and the Śaiva treatise Tattvajñāna. On the basis of these preliminary findings, as well as of my past research on the West Javanese scriptorium of Ciburuy and the Central Javanese Merapi-Merbabu mss. collection, I shall elaborate on the existence of a network of Indu-Buddhist hermitages-cum-scriptoria, which spread over mountainous areas of Java from the early Majapahit period well into the colonial period.

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An endearing epistle from a Dutch colonial Governor to a Malay ruler in his dominion
Prof. Ulrich Kratz, SOAS (eukratz@gmail.com)

The form and content of a rather brief Jawi document of 1899 from Bima
Dr Jelani Harun, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang (jelani@usm.my)

The Cambridge manuscript of the Misa Melayu
Prof. Vladimir Braginsky, SOAS (vibraginsky@hotmail.com)

The theme and variations: Turkish motifs in traditional Malay literature
Seda Kousnetsova, London

Ottoman influence on Malay diplomats
Dr Annabel Teh Gallop, British Library (annabel.gallop@bl.uk)