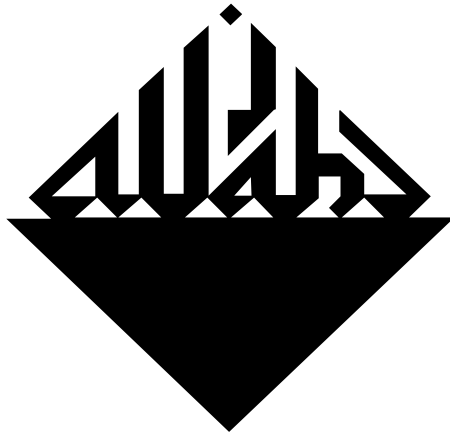


# STUDIA ISLAMIKA

INDONESIAN JOURNAL FOR ISLAMIC STUDIES

Volume 28, Number 1, 2021



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TRUSTING IN GOD:  
RELIGIOUS INSCRIPTIONS ON MALAY SEALS

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THE PERSECUTION OF ROHINGYA MUSLIMS  
AND THE PATH TO DEMOCRATIZATION IN MYANMAR

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A CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF  
“AKSI BELA ISLAM” MARCH IN JAKARTA (2016)

Rahmat Hidayatullah

# **STUDIA ISLAMIKA**



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*Annabel Teh Gallop*

## Trusting in God: Religious Inscriptions on Malay Seals

**Abstract:** *Malay seals – which can be defined as seals from Southeast Asia with inscriptions in Arabic script – date from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and originate from all parts of Nusantara. The inscriptions on Malay seals serve to identify the seal owner through his (or her) name or title, often accompanied by a pedigree, date, and place name. About one-third of all Malay seals also include a religious legend, usually in the form of a pious expression, a supplication to God addressed by His Beautiful Names (al-asmā' al-ḥusnā), or a quotation from the Qur'an. This article demonstrates a striking degree of uniformity in the religious expressions found in Malay seals from all over the archipelago. Over half of these can be characterized as variations on a theme of al-wāthiq billāh, 'he who trusts in God', but at the same time, there are also distinctive regional associations in different states in the archipelago with certain preferred phrases.*

**Keywords:** Malay Seals, Islamic Seals, Religious Inscriptions, Sigillography.



**Abstrak:** *Stempel (Cap) Melayu –guna menyebut stempel dari Asia Tenggara dengan tulisan dalam aksara Arab– berasal dari abad ke-16 hingga abad ke-20, dan berasal dari seluruh wilayah Nusantara. Inskripsi yang terdapat pada stempel Melayu berfungsi untuk mengidentifikasi pemilik cap tersebut melalui nama atau gelarnya, beberapa diantaranya terdapat silsilah, tanggal, dan nama tempat. Sekitar sepertiga dari stempel Melayu yang ada juga menyertakan penanda keagamaan, biasanya dalam bentuk ekspresi kesalehan, doa-doa kepada Tuhan yang disampaikan dengan menggunakan Nama-nama yang Indah (al-asmā' al-husná), atau kutipan dari Al-Qur'an. Artikel ini menunjukkan adanya tingkat keseragaman yang mencolok dalam ekspresi keagamaan yang ditemukan pada stempel Melayu dari seluruh Nusantara. Lebih dari separuhnya dapat dicirikan sebagai variasi pada tema al-wāthiq billāh, 'dia yang percaya pada Tuhan', tetapi pada saat yang sama juga merepresentasikan karakter berbagai wilayah di Nusantara dengan penggunaan pilihan frasa tertentu.*

**Kata kunci:** Stempel (Cap) Melayu, Stempel Islam, Inskripsi Keagamaan, Sigillografi.

**ملخص:** تعود الأختام الملايوية –لتسمية الأختام من جنوب شرقي آسيا المكتوبة بالحروف العربية– إلى القرن السادس عشر حتى القرن العشرين، والتي كان مصدرها جميع مناطق نوسانتارا. وتعمل النقوش الموجودة فيها على تحديد صاحب الأختام من خلال ذكر الأسماء والألقاب، كما أن بعضها يحتوي على النسب والتواريخ، وأسماء الأماكن. وكذلك يشتمل حوالي ثلثها على مصطلحات دينية تتمثل عادة في شكل تعبيرات عن التقوى، أو الأدعية إلى الله بأسمائه الحسنى، أو اقتباسات من الآيات القرآنية. ويشير هذا المقال إلى درجة كبيرة من التجانس في التعبيرات الدينية الموجودة في الأختام الملايوية من جميع أنحاء نوسانتارا. ويمكن وصف أكثر من نصفها بأنها تنوعات لموضوع «الواثق بالله»، ولكنها في الوقت نفسه تمثل خصائص مناطق نوسانتارا المختلفة من خلال استخدام العبارات المختارة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الأختام الملايوية، الأختام الإسلامية، النقوش الدينية، علم الأختام.

Seals have functioned as symbols of authority since the earliest days of Islam. According to Arab historians, when the Prophet Muhammad wanted to write to the Byzantine emperor in 628, he was told that the letter would only be read if it bore a seal.<sup>1</sup> He therefore had a seal ring made of silver, inscribed with the words *Muhammad Rasūlullāh*, ‘Muhammad is the messenger of God’.<sup>2</sup> In Islamic seals the inscription thus takes centre stage, unlike European seals which are primarily pictorial. It is this focus on writing, in the Arabic script with its sacral connotations, which links seals from all parts of the Islamic world, from Morocco to Mindanao, and from Turkey to Ternate.

The first documented Islamic seal impressions from Southeast Asia are on a letter in Portuguese from the sultan of Ternate to the king of Portugal in 1560, which bears two seals in Arabic script, of Sultan Khairul Jamal and his son Babullah (Gallop 2019, **1836, 1837**).<sup>3</sup> These are the two earliest of the 2,168 seals recorded in a new book, *Malay Seals from the Islamic World of Southeast Asia: Content, Form, Context, Catalogue* (Gallop 2019), which contains the data analysed in this article. The Malay seals described within date from the 16th through to the early 20th centuries, and originate from present-day Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei and Singapore, and the southern regions of Thailand, Cambodia and the Philippines.

‘Malay seals’ can be defined as seals from Southeast Asia or used by Southeast Asians, with inscriptions in Arabic script. The use of the word ‘Malay’ to refer to seals from all parts of Southeast Asia reflects the role of the Malay language as the *lingua franca* of the whole region for trade, diplomacy and the propagation of religion. Most of the seals are recorded from letters, treaties and other documents written in Malay in Jawi (modified Arabic) script, from all parts of Nusantara, although a few seal matrices (the objects used to stamp the seal impression) are also found. Throughout Islamic Southeast Asia, the use of seals was essentially restricted to court circles, and the seal inscriptions serve to identify the owner by his or her name and/or title, often accompanied by their pedigree, place name, date, a religious expression and sometimes an amuletic formula.

Just over a third – 734 (or 34%) out of 2,168 – of the Malay seals in the recently-published catalogue contain discrete religious expressions. Seals with religious legends are distributed relatively unevenly, ranging from 87% of seals from Brunei and 69% from Sulawesi, to only 7% from Banten. Perhaps the most unexpected result is that only 55 out of 436 seals (13%) from Aceh – renowned as one of the most strongly Islamic of all Southeast

Asian kingdoms – bear explicitly religious phrases. This low proportion is quite surprising as most seals from Aceh date from the late 19th century, when religious sensibilities were heightened due to the representation of the armed struggle against the Dutch as a ‘holy war’, *perang sabil*. On the other hand, it could be argued that almost all textual elements on a Malay seal are implicitly Islamic in character; for example, virtually all common Muslim personal names such as Muhammad, Abdul Rahman (Arabic: *‘Abd al-Rahmān*, ‘the servant of the Most Gracious’) or Zainuddin, (Arabic: *Zayn al-Dīn*, ‘the ornament of religion’) have religious associations (Gallop 2018), while sovereign epithets such as *Zillullāh fi al-‘alam*, ‘the shadow of God on earth’ are unambiguously Islamic in reference. Moreover, in view of the indelible association of Islam and the Arabic script, especially in non-Arabophone parts of the world such as Southeast Asia, the very use of the Arabic or Jawi script on a Malay seal, even to convey an otherwise secular inscription comprising simply the name and title of the sealholder, would have identified these seals as ‘Islamic’ in the eyes of both the ‘authors’ of the seals and their ‘audiences’ in Nusantara.

This article will present and analyse the explicitly religious legends found on Malay seals, comprising pious expressions, exhortations and supplications to God, and quotations from the Qur’an. Despite the temporal and spatial range of these 734 seals, there is a striking degree of uniformity in the expressions found, over half of which can be characterized as variations on a theme of *al-wāthiq billāh*, ‘he who trusts in God’, but at the same time there are also marked associations of certain specific phrases or even single words with particular states in the region.

In the course of this analysis of religious legends on Malay seals, frequent reference will be made to seals from other parts of the Islamic world. At the same time, it should be noted that comparative sources of information generally take the form of catalogues of seal matrices held in museums. These collections are often heavily weighted towards older seal matrices dating from the ‘classical’ period of the 10th–13th centuries, with relatively few later seals of the 16th century onwards, which would provide a better basis for comparison with Malay seals, which are primarily documented from seal impressions on manuscripts. Moreover, a study of seal matrices compared with that of seal impressions may involve inherent biases: seal matrices in the form of engraved gem stones, many of which have been excavated archaeologically, are more likely to belong to commoners. Conversely, seal impressions, through being sourced from

letters, documents and treaties stored in libraries and archives, are often weighted towards the elite ranks of rulers and ministerial figures, and indeed, one third of all Malay seals documented are sovereign seals.

### ‘He Who Trusts in God’: A Personal Relationship with Allāh

The largest category of religious expressions, found in approximately 460 Malay seals, is pious phrases describing a personal relationship between the sealholder and God in the grammatical form *al-X bi-[Allāh]*. In this type of inscription, X is a verbal noun denoting the sealholder, most commonly evoking his submission to or trust in God, while the word *Allāh* is sometimes combined with, or substituted by, one or more Beautiful Names of God (*al-asmā’ al-ḥusnā*). A complete list of these expressions found on Malay seals is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Forms of the pious expression *al-X bi-[Allāh]* found on Malay seals**  
[\*indicates epithets used as regnal titles of ‘Abbāsīd caliphs]

| <i>Al-X bi-[Allāh]</i>            | Translation                               | Provenance of Seal                  | No. of Seals |
|-----------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| <i>Al-Wāthiq* bi-[Allāh]</i>      | He who trusts in God                      | All states                          | 402          |
| <i>Al-Mutawakkil* alā [Allāh]</i> | He who entrusts himself to God            | All states                          | 16           |
| <i>Al-Mutamassik bi-[Allāh]</i>   | He who holds fast to [God]                | Bone 1; Gowa 2; Sulu 5; Sumenep 1   | 9            |
| <i>Al-Manṣūr* bi-[Allāh]</i>      | He who is protected by God                | Siak                                | 7            |
| <i>Al-Rājī ...</i>                | He who desires ....                       | Asahan 1; Kedah 2, Riau 3; Kualuh 1 | 7            |
| <i>Al-Mu‘ayyad billāh</i>         | He who is supported by God                | Mindanao                            | 6            |
| <i>Al-Mu‘taṣim* billāh</i>        | He who seeks shelter in God               | Pahang 1; Selangor 2; Sumenep 1     | 4            |
| <i>Al-Mālik bi-[Allāh]</i>        | He who is king through God                | Siak                                | 3            |
| <i>Al-Multaḥī ilallāh ...</i>     | He who seeks refuge in God ...            | Kedah 2; Batu Bahara 1              | 3            |
| <i>Al-Qābir* bi-[Allāh]</i>       | He who is victorious through God          | Sulu                                | 3            |
| <i>Al-Musta‘īn* billāh</i>        | He who seeks help from God                | Perak 1; Kelantan 1; Sumbawa 1      | 3            |
| <i>Al-Qā‘im* bi-amrillāh</i>      | He who is steadfast by the command of God | Brunei                              | 2            |
| <i>Al-Mu‘min billāh</i>           | The believer in God                       | Ternate                             | 1            |

|  |   |          |   |
|--|---|----------|---|
| <i>Al-Mu'tamid* 'alallāh</i>               | He whose support is in God                                | Banjar   | 1 |
| <i>Al-Muntaşir* billāh</i>                 | He who is victorious through God                          | Kelantan | 1 |
| <i>Al-Mutamassik* bi-faḍl qaşr al-Aḥād</i> | He who holds tight to the grace of the citadel of the One | Gowa     | 1 |
| <i>Al-Mustanjid* bi-al-Rabb al-Wādūd</i>   | He who implores for help from the Most Affectionate Lord  | Tallo'   | 1 |

By far the most common religious legend on Malay seals is the simple phrase *al-wāthiq billāh*, which can be translated as 'he who trusts/confides in God'. This phrase, followed by the name or title of the sealholder, is found on 332 seals from every corner of Southeast Asia, from Sumatra to Sumbawa, and from Banten to Brunei, and through all periods, from the earliest known Malay seals in the 17th century through to the early 20th century. A very typical example is the inscription on the seal of Raja Jafar, Yang Dipertuan Muda of Riau (r. 1806-1831), son of the famous warrior Raja Ali Haji, which reads *al-wathiq billah Raja Muda ibn al-marhum fi sabilillāh sanat 1221*, 'He who trusts in God, Raja Muda, son of the late [witness] to the way of God, the year 1221 (1806/7)' (Gallop 2019, 946) (Figure 1). On some seals the formula is expanded by adding one or more divine Names, while on other seals the name *Allāh* is replaced by another Beautiful Name.



Figure 1. The most common religious expression in Malay seals is *al-wāthiq billāh*, 'he who trusts in God', as found in the seal of Raja Jafar of Riau: *al-wāthiq billāh Raja Muda ibn al-marhum fi sabil Allāh sanat 1221* (1806/7). Letter to T.S. Raffles, 1811. British Library, MSS Eur.D.742/1, f. 27. (Gallop 2019, 946).

A related subgroup comprises seals with the expression *al-wāthiq bi-Y* [*Allāh*], where Y is a noun relating to the beneficence of God such as *'ināyat*, 'favour', or *'awn*, meaning 'help' or 'assistance'. The use of these expressions is particularly associated with Kedah, the origin of nine of the 31 seals with *'ināyat* and four of the six seals with *'awn*. Another concentration is found in Minangkabau, where 12 sovereign seals bear the inscription (sometimes with minor variations): *al-wāthiq bi-'ināyatillāh al-'Aẓīm*, 'He who trusts in the favour of God, the Most Supreme One'.

Almost synonymous in meaning with *al-wāthiq billāh*, and equally widely-distributed in the Malay world, is the expression found in 16 seals: *al-mutawakkil 'alā* [*Allāh*], 'he who entrusts himself to God'. These two groups of pious expressions described above account for over 420 of the approximately 460 seals with the formula *al-X bi-[Allāh]*. Of the other choices for the verbal noun X in this expression encountered on Malay seals, most continue the theme of entrusting themselves to the Almighty and seeking His protection and help, and certain strong regional preferences can be discerned. In the southern Philippine islands, extended forms of the phrase *al-mutamassik billāh*, 'he who holds fast on to God' are associated with royal seals from Sulu, while *al-mu'ayyad billāh*, 'he who is supported by God', is only found on seals from polities in Mindanao.

All the religious expressions discussed above have been purely in Arabic. However, in just a few seals pious expressions in Malay are found, and in general these express the same sentiments of humble and trusting submission to God. Thus, the seal of Sultan Mansur of Kelantan (r. 1891-1900) bears the Malay equivalent of *al-wāthiq billāh*, commencing *Yang berserah kepada Tuhan*, 'he who surrenders to God,' (1146), while another Kelantan seal of Tengku Yusuf dated 1311 (1893/4) bears the cognate expression *Yang bergantung dengan Allah*, 'he who relies on God' (1178). The new catalogue also includes a small number of seals with inscriptions in other Indonesian languages. Five seals of sultans of Tanete in south Sulawesi are highly distinctive, taking the shape of Zulfikar, the two-bladed sword of the Prophet, with inscriptions in Bugis script. The seal of Sultan Abdullah Saifuddin (r. 1807-1829) reads: *Cá'na arunng'e / ri Tanete ri / asengge Abadulla Saepudini'* to *mappelsonannge nngi ri / Alataala sininna gau'na*, 'Seal of the ruler of / Tanete by / the name of Abadulla Saépudiniq [Abdullah Saifuddin], a man / who entrusts to / God the Exalted all his works' (1762) (Figure 2). Thus this seal inscription in Bugis conveys exactly

the same pious sentiment as the Arabic *al-wāthiq billāh* and the Malay *yang berserah kepada Tuhan*.



Figure 2. Seal of Sultan Abdullah Saifuddin of Tanete, inscribed in Bugis, expressing trust in God. *Ca'na arunnge ri Tanete riasengge Abadulla Saepudini' to mappesonanngge nngi ri Alataala sininna gauqna*. Letter to the Dutch Resident of Makassar, 1821.

Leiden University Library, Cod. Or. 2233.109. (Gallop 2019, 1762)

This emphasis on confiding or placing one's trust in God is by no means unique to Southeast Asia. On the evidence of published studies and catalogues of Islamic seals, it is found from the very earliest days of the faith and may represent a continuation of a practice from pre-Islamic Sasanian seal culture (Porter 2011, 50). In early Islamic seal matrices before the 14th century, pious phrases relating to trust in God (*al-thiqa billāh*) are manifest in a wide variety of grammatical forms, with at least seven versions documented.<sup>4</sup> These include *Allāh thiqaṭ Z*, 'God is the trust of Z', *thiqaṭ Z billāh*, 'the trust of Z is in God', *billāh thiqaṭ Z*, 'in God is the trust of Z', and the imperative *thiq billāh yā Z*, 'Trust in God, O Z!'. Also common are the combinations *yathiq billāh Z*, 'Z trusts in God'; *billāh yathiq Z*, 'in God trusts Z', and most frequently, *billāh Z yathiq*, 'in God Z trusts', with *billāh* placed on the top line and *yathiq* on the bottom, with the personal name of the sealholder in the centre (cf. Porter et al. 2011, 50–55).

While all these grammatical forms are found in early Islamic seals, it is only in later seals from approximately the 15th century onwards that the form *wāthiq* appears (Kalus 1987, 240), occasionally in the form *Z wāthiq billāh*, 'Z, trusting in God', but more commonly as *al-wāthiq billāh Z*, 'he who trusts in God, Z', as found in Malay usage. Among the

earliest known published examples are two seals of Timurid officials on a decree of Shāh Rukh (r.1405-47) (Fekete and Hazai 1977, 87), while the two earliest barely legible Malay seals – the Timurid-style seals used by Sultan Khairul Jamal of Ternate and his son in 1560 – may also contain this expression (1836, 1837). The phrase *al-wāthiq bi-[Allāh]* is also found on over half the 116 seals from 16th-century Ottoman Hungary documented by Römer (1995), and on a dozen 19th century seals of the rulers of Muscat, Jeddah and smaller Gulf states (Tirmizi 1982). This formula is even applied to the Christian Deity on a seal in Arabic script dated 1217 (1802/3) of the Ethiopian Christian ruler Welde Sillase Kifle Iyyesus, in the form *al-wāthiq bi-al-Malik al-Quddūs*, ‘he who trusts in the King, the Most Holy One’ (Rubenson 1987, xx).

Thus on the one hand the popularity of the expression *al-wāthiq billāh* in the Malay world may simply reflect a broader trend throughout the Islamic world from the 17th century onwards. On the other hand, the marked preference on Malay seals for the verbal noun form *al-X* is striking, embracing nearly all pious expressions denoting a personal relationship between the sealholder and God. One possible source of influence may be the regnal titles of the ‘Abbāsīd caliphate.<sup>5</sup> The ‘Abbāsīd caliphs were the first Muslim rulers to adopt as regnal names religious *laqab* (plural *alqāb*) expressing their devotion to God, and it is notable that the pious expressions in the form *al-X billāh* found on Malay seals mirror exactly the type of *alqāb* institutionalised by the ‘Abbāsīd caliphs. Indeed, well over half of all the expressions in Malay seals discussed above were used as regnal names by the caliphs, as listed in Table 2.

Table 2: ‘Abbāsīd caliphs whose regnal titles are used as pious expressions on Malay seals

| Caliph                 | Reign Date |
|------------------------|------------|
| Al-Manṣūr              | 754-75     |
| Al-Mu‘taṣim billāh     | 833-42     |
| Al-Wāthiq billāh       | 842-7      |
| Al-Mutawakkil ‘alallāh | 847-61     |
| Al-Muntaṣir billāh     | 861-2      |
| Al-Musta‘in billāh     | 862-66     |
| Al-Mu‘tamid ‘alallāh   | 870-92     |
| Al-Qāhir billāh        | 932-4      |
| Al-Qā’im bi-amrillāh   | 1031-75    |
| Al-Mustanjid billāh    | 1160-70    |



Malay kingdoms were certainly familiar with the history of the ‘Abbāsids, and the name of the fifth caliph, Hārūn al-Rashīd (r.786-809), was adopted by a 17th-century ruler of Tallo’ and a 19th-century sultan of Sulu. Indeed, ‘Abbāsīd-style *alqāb* were adopted by at least one dynasty of Malay rulers, the 19th-century house of Banjarmasin, as recorded on their seals: Sultan Sulaymān al-Mu‘tamīd ‘alā Allāh (r.1801, 1808-1825), Sultan Adam al-Wāthīq billāh (r.1825-1857) and Sultan Tamjidullah al-Wāthīq billāh (r.1857-1859).

The inscriptions on the seals of the Rightly Guided, Umayyad and ‘Abbāsīd caliphs were recorded by a number of medieval Arabic authors, and many of these references have been collated by Gignoux & Kalus (1982). Thus according to al-Mas‘ūdī the seal of the Rightly-Guided caliph ‘Alī was inscribed *al-mulk lillāh*, ‘sovereignty belongs to God’, while Ibn ‘Arabi gives the inscription on the seal of the ‘Abbāsīd caliph al-Mu‘taḍīd billāh as *tawakkul takfa*, ‘trust [in God] is sufficient’. Studies in Islamic sigillography have often drawn attention to the repeated use on later seals of inscriptions such as these ascribed to caliphal seals. But the study of Malay seals leads to the inference that religious legends on Malay seals were influenced not by the inscriptions on the seals of the caliphs, but by the titles or *alqāb* of the caliphs themselves. For a non-Arabophone region such as Southeast Asia, the well-known regnal titles of the caliphs may have been an easier linguistic choice in preference to selecting one of the many other congruent grammatical forms.

### Other Pious Phrases: Sovereign Concerns

A considerable proportion of the seals in the accompanying catalogue are the seals of sovereigns, and a number of religious expressions pertain directly to sovereignty, as illustrated by the predilection for certain Qur’anic quotations. One of the most popular sentiments, found on 46 Malay sovereign seals, is a hope that God will preserve their kingdoms, expressed as *khallada* (or: *abbada* / *ādāma*) *Allāh mulkahu* (and/or: *sulṭānahu* / *‘adlahu* / *faḍlahu* / *iḥsānahu*), ‘may God preserve (or: immortalise / perpetuate / be generous to) his realm (and/or: dominion / justice / grace / benevolence). Similar expressions occur frequently on Islamic coins and seals (Codrington 1904, 30–34; Uzuncarsili 1959, 13) and also in Malay texts. This expression is particularly associated with the northeast coast of the Malay peninsula, being found on 22 seals from Kelantan, Patani and Legih, all dating from the 19th century,

in its fullest form reading *khalladallāh mulkahū wa-‘adlahū wa-fadlahū wa-ihsānahū*, ‘may God preserve his realm and his justice, grace and benevolence’ (1159) on the seal of Sultan Ismail of Kelantan. It is also found on five seals from Palembang and on nine seals from south Sulawesi, including the earliest known Sulawesi seal, that of Sultan Alauddin of Gowa (r. 1593-1639), while the feminine form is found on the seal of Sultanah Zakiatuddin Zainab of Bone, who reigned in the first half of the 18th century: *ādāmallāh mulkahā wa-sultānahā*, ‘may God perpetuate her realm and dominion’ (1632, Figure 3).



Figure 3. Silver seal matrix of Sultanah Zakiatuddin Zainab of Bone, with eight Beautiful Names of God in the border: *Sanat 1136 (1723/4) ādāmallāh mulkahā wa-sultānahā Zakiatuddin Zainab bint al-Sultan Bone Idris // Yā Hannān Yā Mannān Yā Dayyān Yā Burhān Yā Subhān Yā Ḥayy Yā Qayyūm Yā Dha al-Jalāl wa-al-Ikrām*. Museum La Pawawoi, Watampone (photograph by Mukrimin). (Gallop 2019, 1632).

### The Beautiful Names of God: *Al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā*

On seal inscriptions the name *Allāh* is often accompanied by, or substituted by, one or more divine epithets, usually known as ‘the most Beautiful Names’ of God, *al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*. In the Qur’an (7:180) it is said: ‘The most Beautiful Names belong to God: so call on Him by them’. By tradition there are 99 Beautiful Names, but in fact more than 99 different divine epithets are used in the Qur’an, and variant lists exist. In this discussion of the Beautiful Names, reference is made to three main sources: the ‘most usually accepted list, in accordance with the *ḥadīth*’ published in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Gardet 1960); the list of 99 ‘most often used’ Names, which being compiled with special reference to inscriptions on coins, talismans and amulets is of particular relevance to seals (Codrington

1904, 40–42); and a near-exhaustive list of over 550 epithets, including many compound forms, compiled from the Qur'an and from known lists of the 99 Names, and which has the advantage of giving the Qur'anic reference (if any) for each entry (Redhouse 1880).<sup>6</sup> So far, 78 Beautiful Names have been documented on Malay seals, used in a variety of contexts, including in pious expressions, within Qur'anic quotations and as elements of a personal name preceded by *'abd*, 'servant of'.<sup>7</sup> One of the most important Qur'anic verses relating to the Beautiful Names is given on the seal of Sultan Safuddin Nuh of Soppeng: *al-Malik al-Quddūs al-Salām al-Mūmin al-[Mu]haymin al-'Azīz al-Jabbār al-Mutakabbir*, 'the Sovereign, the Holy One, the Source of Peace (and Perfection), the Guardian of Faith, the Preserver of Safety, the Exalted in Might, the Irresistible, the Supreme' (Qur'an 59:23). This is the longest enumeration of divine Names in the Qur'an, and these are therefore the Names which follow immediately after *Allāh*, *al-Raḥmān* and *al-Raḥīm* on traditional lists (Gardet 1960, 714).

In pious expressions of the form *al-X bi-[Allāh]* discussed above, in addition to *Allāh* and *Allāh ta'ālā*, 36 different Beautiful Names are used to refer to God. As so many Malay seals are sovereign seals, it comes as little surprise that the most frequently-used Beautiful Name is *al-Malik*, 'the King', found on 33 seals. It is usually found together with other Names, such as *al-Malik al-Matīn*, 'the King, the Unshakeable One,' found on six seals from Terengganu. The sequence *al-Malik al-Ḥaqq al-Mubīn*, 'the King, the Truth, the Manifest One', is only found on royal seals from Selangor in Southeast Asia, but is very common in other contemporaneous Islamic seals from Iran and the Maldives (Tirmizi 1982, 123, 126, 140). Thus while some choices of divine Names are found throughout the Malay world, others are specifically associated with certain regions, including *al-'Azīz*, 'the Most Mighty One', in Kelantan and *Rabb al-'arsh*, 'Lord of the throne' in Riau.

In a few cases, there are clear reasons discernible behind the choice of a particular divine Name, such as the shared root with the regnal name of a sultan of Sulu, whose seal reads *al-wāthiq billāh al-'Azīm al-Sultan Muhammad Azimuddin (1894)*. There may also be theological underpinnings for the choice: *al-Hamīd* and *al-Majīd* are paired together in the Qur'an (11:76), and this probably explains the composition of the inscription on the seal of the Sultan Abdul Hamid of Bima: *al-wāthiq billāh al-Rabb al-Majīd al-Sultan Abdul Hamid ibn al-Sultan Abdul Kadim*, 'he who trusts in God, the Lord, the Most Glorious One, Sultan

Abdul Hamid, son of Sultan Abdul Kadim' (1779). Thereafter, however, the expression *al-wāthiq billāh al-Rabb al-Majīd* – which is not found on Malay seals from any other region – was used on the seals of all subsequent rulers of Bima (in conjunction with each of their different names) for the next hundred years. Two seals coloured by Minangkabau influence both have a border inscription with eight compartments, reading *Allāh / al-Dā'im / Allāh / al-Bāqī / Allāh / al-Qawī / Allāh / al-Qādir*, 'God / the Perpetual One / God / the Eternal One / God / the Very Strong One / God / the Powerful One' (460, 473). These four Names comprise two almost synonymous pairs, and all come in the category of those Names 'that betoken an attribute leaning to the exhibition of stern justice and severity', the *asmā' al-jalāl*, 'the names of Majesty' (Redhouse 1880, 12).

In some other parts of the Islamic world, a key factor influencing the choice of Beautiful Names in the formula *al-wāthiq bi-[Allāh]* is poetical. So strikingly consistent is this the case in a group of late 16th-century Ottoman Turkish seals analysed by Römer (1995: 112-5) that her categorisation of seal inscriptions is based primarily on poetics. In one category, all the inscriptions conform to the formula *al-wāthiq bi-al-Malik al-X, Y bin Z*, where X rhymes with the patronymic Z, as in the example *al-wāthiq bi-al-Malik al-Mannān, Ibrāhīm bin Turhān*. Römer identifies 32 such pairings of personal names and Divine Names. For another category of seals bearing personal names perhaps not so easily (or auspiciously) matched, the all-purpose rhyming formula *Y bin Z al-faqīr, al-wāthiq billāh al-Qādir*, 'the poor Y bin Z, who trusts in God, the All Powerful' is used (Römer 1995, 112–15).

Literary considerations are rarely to the fore in Malay seals. However, the rhyming principle does appear to underly the composition of at least a few inscriptions, as in a seal from Tallo' – *al-wāthiq bi-al-Malik al-Nāfi' Abdul Kadir bin Syaḥ*, 'he who trusts in the King, the Advantageous One, Abdul Kadir, son of Syaḥ' (1751) – and another from Pulau Pinang, *al-wāthiq billāh al-Majīd al-Sayid Husain bin Abdul Rahman Aidid* (1139). In many other Malay seals assonance or internal rhyme is all that seems to have been aimed for, with little concern for scansion, and the dynastic name of the rulers of Pontianak, al-Kadri, may have influenced their choice of the Beautiful Name *al-Bārī*, as in the seal of Sultan Syarif Kasim (1443, see Figure 4). In two seals from Kedah, the choice of divine Name may have been influenced by the rhyming possibilities of the place-name, rather than the name of

the sealholder, as in *al-wāthiq bi-‘ināyat al-Rahmān Laksamana dār al-amān* (1032). Uniquely in the Islamic world of Southeast Asia, only in Sulu is there evidence of a consistent attempt to rhyme divine Names and regnal names. This pattern is manifested on the seals of six sultans of Sulu over a period of at least a hundred and fifty years, as in the seal of Sultan Jamalul Kiram I (r. 1824-1843) which reads *al-qāhir bi-amr al-Malik al-‘alām al-Sultān Muḥammad Jamāl al-Kirām* (1898), ‘He who conquers through the command of the King of the world, the Sultan Muhammad Jamalul Kiram’.

All the Beautiful Names discussed above are relatively well-known, but very occasionally Malay seals contain epithets used as Beautiful Names which do not appear in any of the lists consulted. Two such terms are used prominently on seals of the sultans of Jambi. The word *jali* (j.l.y), meaning ‘bright, clear, polished’ is found on nine royal seals from Jambi, from the mid-18th to the late 19th century, in the phrase *al-wāthiq billāh al-Jalī*, which could be translated as ‘he who trusts in God, the Resplendent One’ (637, Figure 4). The other unusual epithet, also found only in Jambi, is *makīn* (m.k.y.n), ‘firm, powerful, masterly’, found on only one seal, of Sultan Masud Badaruddin (r. 1777-90), in the form *al-wāthiq billāh al-Makīn*, ‘he who trusts in God, the Master’ (638).



Figure 4. Seal of Sultan Ahmad Zainuddin of Jambi, utilising an unusual Beautiful Name: *al-wāthiq billāh al-Jalī Sultan Ahmad Zainuddin // Sultan / Anum / Seri / Ingalaga*. Contract with the VOC, 1763. Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, Riouw 68/7. (Gallop 2019, 637).

### Calling on God by His Beautiful Names

One of the most notable uses of Beautiful Names of God on Malay seals is in the form of a direct appeal or supplication (*du‘ā*) to God, in the

form *Yā* [*Allāh*], where *Allāh* may be combined with or substituted by one or more divine Names. In addition to *Allāh*, 28 divine Names have been found in a supplicatory context on Malay seals. The importance of the use of the most Beautiful Names of God in this way ‘lies in the belief that God is bound to answer whenever He is called by any one of them’ (Canaan 1937, 80). Similar inscriptions are well-documented in published collections of other Islamic seals, and even more so with talismans, on which are sometimes engraved all 99 Beautiful Names each prefaced by *Yā* (Porter 2011, 132).

The main concentration of Malay seals containing these expressions is in Sulawesi, often within the context of quite long and elaborate pious expressions in Arabic. Three early 18th-century seals of Jalaluddin ibn Idris (Sultan Jalaluddin of Bone, r. 1749-1775) all commence *yā Allāh al-Mahmūd fi kull fi’ālihi*, ‘O God, the Praised in all His actions’ (1635-7), while the seal of Sultan Harun al-Rasyid of Tallo’, found on the Treaty of Bongaya of 1667, reads *yā Karīm al-Wahhāb al-mu’ī bi-ghayr ḥiṣāb ilayhi al-marjī’ wa-al-mā’ab*, ‘O All Bountiful One, the All Bestower, who gives without reckoning, to Him are all restored and returned’ (1750). The large and elaborate seal of the Sultanah Siti Fatimah of Pamanah, who reigned in the early 19th century, bears the following border inscription: *yā Dha al-jalāl wa-al-ikrām amitnā ‘alā dīn al-islām*, ‘O Possessor of Majesty and Honour, confer favour on the faith of Islam’ (1735).

A distinct sub-genre consists of seal inscriptions where the emphasis is on the Names of God themselves. These seals carry a series of exhortations to God, addressed by a selection of the most Beautiful Names, each prefaced by a beseeching *yā*, ‘O’. There are 13 such seals from Bone, Sidenreng and Gowa in south Sulawesi, dating from the early 17th to the early 19th centuries. One of the seals from Gowa is that of the first Muslim sultan, Alauddin (r. 1593-1639), and is one of the earliest known Malay seals. The border inscription contains supplications to God addressed by six of His Beautiful Names: *Yā Ḥannān Yā Mannān Yā Dayyān Yā Subhān Yā Hayy Yā Qayyum Yā Dhū al-Jalāl wa-al-Ikrām*, ‘O Ever Yearning One! O Ever Bestowing One! O Requirer of good and evil! O Living One! O Self-Subsistent One! O Possessor of Majesty and Honour!’ (1701). Of the other seals, eight Names are found in the border of the seal of Sultanah Zakiatuddin Zainab of Bone (r. 1728-1748) (1632, Figure 3), but the longest list,

of ten Names, is found on the seal of her husband Aru Kaju, called on his seal Sultan Mahmud: *Yā Allāh Yā Hayy Yā Qayyūm Yā Ḥannān Yā Mannān Yā Dayyān Yā Burhān Yā Subhān Yā Raḥmān Yā Raḥīm*, ‘O God! O Living One! O Self-Subsistent One! O Ever Yearning One! O Ever Bestowing One! O Requirer of good and evil! O Proof! O Most Holy One! O Merciful One! O Compassionate One!’ (1634).

We thus have a striking picture of the use of what is essentially the same inscription across varying kingdoms of south Sulawesi for a period of around two hundred years. Yet this formula is certainly not an archipelagic innovation: three seals of high-ranking Ottoman officials, dated respectively 1689, 1784 and 1820, all bear the secondary inscription *Yā Ḥannān Yā Mannān Yā Subhān Yā Dayyān* (Uzuncarsili 1959, 41–44), while in his list of religious legends found on Islamic coins, Codrington (1904, 38) includes: *Yā Raḥman Yā Ḥannān Yā Mannān Yā Dayyān Yā Subhān*. Five of these Names – *al-Ḥannān*, *al-Mannān*, *al-Dayyān*, *al-Burhān* and *al-Subhān* – share the same internal rhyme, a characteristic noted by Canaan (1937, 80) as influencing the choice of divine Names used in talismans. Perhaps significantly, none of these names occur on the ‘most usually accepted list, in accordance with the *ḥadīth*’ reproduced in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Even in the authoritative lists of Tirmidhi and Ibn Maja consulted by Doutté, only *al-Burhān* is found on Ibn Maja’s list (Doutté 1908, 201). While variations between different lists of the 99 Names are well-acknowledged, this degree of divergence is quite striking. All five Names are, however, discussed by Redhouse, who singles out *Subhān* for special attention. Although it has been included in one of his source lists of divine Names, Redhouse emphatically denies that it can be one: ‘The word is never used as a divine name or title, and is always a doxology alone. To suppose that it is a “name of God” is a gross error’, and he discusses the probable origin of this apparent malapropism (Redhouse 1880, 37–38). Nonetheless, the evidence of both Ottoman and Malay seals as well as other Islamic coins indicates a deeply-entrenched view of *Subhān* (translated here as ‘the Most Praised One’) as an acceptable term of address for God. A picture thus emerges of a certain set of divine Names perceived to share certain, possibly protective, qualities and which are therefore used time and time again, across continents and centuries.

On some seals parts of the inscription are rendered esoteric through the use of amuletic devices like disconnected letters or mirror script which are believed to enhance the protective value of inscriptions. The

suggestion of a talismanic consideration in the use of certain divine Names is very clear in a group of seven seals from Landak, Mempawah and Pontianak in Kalimantan, which all have border inscriptions written in disconnected letters. On all the Pontianak seals the border reads: *Yā Budūh Yā Maḥdār Yā Ḥāfiẓ Yā Ḥāfiẓ Yā Kāfi Yā Muḥīt Ma'rūf al-Karkhī*, 'O Budūh! O Presence! O Guardian! O All Preserving One! O Sufficient One! O Comprehending One! Ma'rūf al-Karkhī' (1443, Figure 5). Of these appellatives, *al-Ḥāfiẓ*, *al-Ḥāfiẓ*, *al-Kāfi* and *al-Muḥīt* are widely recognized as Beautiful Names, but *al-Maḥdār* is not included in any known list. *Budūh* is a well-known artificial talismanic word associated with the 3 x 3 magic square, while the name of the Ma'rūf al-Karkhī – a Sufi saint who died in Baghdad in 815 – when written in disconnected letters, is a uniquely Southeast Asian epistolary amulet used on letters or documents to ensure safe delivery (Gallop 2013).

In most Malay seal inscriptions the focus of the religious expression is the direct spiritual relationship between the sealholder and God, but in a few seals respects are also paid to the Prophet. Seals from Bima and Dompu on the island of Sumbawa with personal names such as *Abdul Muhammad* and *Abdul Nabi* evidenced special veneration for the Prophet (Gallop 2018, 13), and it is on a seal from Dompu that the unique expression *al-wāthiq billāh wa-bi-rasūlillāh*, 'He who trusts in God and the Messenger of God' (1805) is found.



Figure 5. Seal of Sultan Syarif Kasim of Pontianak, with the Beautiful Names of God and other amuletic elements written in disconnected letters in the border. *al-wāthiq billāh al-Khāliq al-Bārī wa-huwa 'abduka al-Sultan al-Sayid al-Syarif Kasim ibn al-marhum al-Sultan al-Sayid al-Syarif Abdul Rahman ibn al-marhum al-Habib Husain al-Kadri // Yā Budūh Yā Maḥdār Yā Ḥāfiẓ Yā Ḥāfiẓ Yā Kāfi Yā Muḥīt Ma'rūf al-Karkhī*. Letter to T.S. Raffles, 1811. British Library, MSS.Eur.D.742/1, f. 32. (Gallop 2019, 1443)



## Quotations from the Qur'an

The Qur'anic quotations found on 59 Malay seals range from single words and phrases to complete verses,<sup>8</sup> some of which are frequently found on Islamic coins and seals from all over the world, while others are less common. The two most important Qur'anic quotations are, naturally, the *shahādah* and the *bismillāh*. The *bismillāh* is found on six seals. In two royal seals from Aceh, including that of Sultanah Tajul Alam Safiatuddin Syah (r. 1641-75), it is presented in the context of its first full occurrence in the Qur'an, in S. al-Naml, at the opening of the letter sent from the Prophet Sulaymān (Solomon) to the Queen of Sheba: *innahu min Sulaymān wa-innahu bismillāh al-Rahmān al-Rahīm*, 'It is from Solomon and is (as follows): In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful' (Qur'an 27:30). The Islamic creed, the *shahādah*, is made up of two separate Qur'anic verses: *Lā ilāha illallāh* (Qur'an 47:19) *Muḥammad rasūl Allāh* (Qur'an 48:29), 'There is no god but God; Muhammad is the messenger of God.' The full *shahādah* occurs in 11 Malay seals, while four seals contain the first part only, and another seal contains the second part only.

Most of the more lengthy Qur'anic quotations are found on the seals of sovereigns, which tend to have the longest and most sophisticated inscriptions. Some of these verses pertain directly to sovereignty, such as the inscription on the seals of five sultans of Selangor: *aṭī' ullaḥ wa-aṭī' ū al-rasūl wa-ūli al-amri minkum*, 'Obey God, and obey the Messenger, and those charged with authority among you' (Qur'an 4:59). For obvious reasons this is a verse much favoured by Islamic rulers all over the world: it is frequently found on Islamic coins (cf. Codrington 1904: 24); it was highly conspicuous as the *tughrā* of the Mughal emperor Aurangzib, found at the top of all his *firman*s;<sup>9</sup> and it is quoted twice in the *Tāj al-salaṭīn*, a guide to good governance, in a chapter arguing for Divinely-ordained obedience to rulers (Khalid 1992, 47, 61). In the two earlier Selangor seals it is followed by another verse: *lillāh al-amr min qabl wa-min ba'd*, 'with God is the Decision, in the Past and in the Future' (Qur'an 30:4); in the two later ones a different additional verse is used: *fā-Allāh khayr ḥāfizā wa-huwa Arham al-rāḥimīn*, 'But God is the best to take care (of him), and He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy' (Qur'an 12:64). Selangor is thus a striking example of a state where a particular Qur'anic quotation has become a dynastic motto, being reproduced on seals of rulers throughout the history of

the sultanate, from the late-18th to the mid-20th centuries, while not occurring on any other Malay seals from other states.

The same process can be observed in Buton, where seals of at least eight rulers, over a period of two centuries from the mid-17th to the early 20th centuries, all bear the same border inscription: *Allāhumma Mālik al-mulk tu'tī al-mulk dā'ima bi-dawām al-bahir fī kull [al-]dahr madīd*, 'O God, Lord of Power (and Rule), You give Power which lasts as long as there is light, throughout everlasting time' (Figure 6). This is actually a paraphrase of a Qur'anic verse (3:26): *Allāhumma Mālik al-mulk tu'tī al-mulk man tashā' wa-tanzi'ū al-mulk mimman tashā'*, 'O God, Lord of Power (and Rule), You give Power to whom You please, and You strip off Power from whom You please.' The emphasis on the transitory nature of worldly power in this verse has vanished in the seal inscription; in place is a paraphrase, of exactly opposite intent, extolling the permanence of kingship bestowed by God. Reflecting on references to the Qur'an in Malay texts seeking to uphold the position of the Raja, Milner (1982, 52) has written, 'the Qur'an is not a comforting text ... for those who cherish a Raja-centred polity', but the Buton seal is an example of how a Qur'anic cloak can nevertheless be draped ingeniously around even a non-congruent concept.



Figure 6. Seal of Sultan Dayan Asraruddin of Buton, with an adapted Qur'anic quotation in the border: *al-Sultan Dayan Asraruddin ibn Abdullah // Allāhumma Mālik al-mulk tū'tī al-mulk dā'im bi-dawām al-bāhir fī kull al-dahr madīd*. Letter to the Dutch Governor-General in Batavia, 1801. Leiden University Library, Cod. Or. 2242.II.15. (Gallop 2019, 1690)

A small group of non-royal late-19th century seals from Aceh share a number of similar Qur'anic verses. The seal of Teungku Chik Harun, dated 1307 (1889/90) is inscribed in the middle *ḥasbī Allāh*, 'God suffices me' (Qur'an 9:129; 39:38). This verse is found on Islamic seals

over many centuries, and was said to have been inscribed on the seal of the Abbasid Caliph al-Mahdī (r. 775-85) (Porter 2011, 66). Found on six seals from Aceh is *hasbunallāh wa-nī'ma al-wakīl*, 'For us God suffices, and He is the best disposer of affairs' (Qur'an 3:173); two seals continue with another verse *nī'ma al-mawlā wa-nī'ma al-naṣīr*, 'the Best to protect and the Best to help' (Qur'an 8:40).

Both a seal of Sultan Abdul Rahman Muazzam Syah, the last sultan of Lingga (r. 1885-1911) and that of Panembahan Kusuma Adi Ningrat of Landak contain the powerful verse: *naṣr minallāh wa-fatḥ qarīb wa-bashar al-mū'minīn*, 'Help from God and a speedy victory, so give the Glad Tidings to the Believers' (Qur'an 61:13). This verse is frequently associated with protective amulets and is often found on Islamic seals and talismans.<sup>10</sup> Its esoteric intent is undoubted in these two seals from Johor and Landak as in both seals it is written in disconnected letters.

### Concluding Thoughts

This article has presented and analysed the religious legends found on 734 Malay seals from Southeast Asia inscribed in Arabic script, mainly in the Arabic language but with a few in Malay and other Indonesian languages, dating from the late 16th to the early 20th centuries, drawn from a recently-published catalogue (Gallop 2019). These religious elements can broadly be categorised in three groups: firstly, pious phrases mostly voicing the seal holder's trust in God, but also with some sovereign seals containing pleas for the perpetuation of their rule; secondly, exhortations and supplications to God addressed by one or more of his Beautiful Names (*al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*); and thirdly quotations from the Qur'an.

The most striking observation that can be made is the widespread popularity of the phrase *al-wāthiq billāh*, 'he who trusts in God', or variations on this theme of humble expressions of confiding, submitting or entrusting oneself to God's care. This expression is found in over half of all Malay seals with religious legends, and occurs in every single region under consideration, from Patani to the Philippines, and in all centuries. However, the widespread use of *al-wāthiq billāh* is not unique to Southeast Asia, and therefore should probably not be interpreted as reflecting a particular religious tendency in the Malay world. Rather, this phrase is commonly found on seals from all over the Islamic world from the 16th century onwards, including from the Ottoman empire.

Within this broad grouping, what does seem to be significant in Malay seals is the ubiquity of religious expressions of the grammatical form *al-X bi-[Allāh]*, where X is a verbal noun generally expressing submission to or trust in God, but in the case of some royal seals occasionally embracing concerns pertaining to sovereignty. There appears to be a strong correlation on Malay seals with the precise formulations of such phrases familiar from Islamic history as the *alqāb* or titles of the ‘Abbāsīd caliphs, which may perhaps account for their popularity in Southeast Asia.

Thus it can be said that Malay seals form an integral subgroup of Islamic seals, sharing in a universally-popular set of pious expressions centred on submission to God. The overwhelming majority of religious legends on Malay seals are devotional and humble in tone, with the sealholder seeking refuge in God or confiding and trusting in Him. The focus of most inscriptions is on the personal relationship between the sealholder – whether king or commoner – and God. The only significantly different tenor struck is in a number of sovereign seals, where the emphasis is on the divinely-ordained authority and glory of the ruler. These dual concerns are vividly reflected in the inscription of the earliest locally made Malay seal, that of Sultan Alauddin Riayat Syah of Aceh (r. 1589-1604): *al-wāthiq bi-al-Malik ikhtārah liqabd al-mamālik wa-irtadāh adāma Allāh izzahu wa-nasr liwā’iyahu*, ‘he who trusts in the King [i.e. God], who has chosen him to possess kingdoms and is pleased with him; may God perpetuate his glory and grant victory to his banner’ (1). Even the seemingly awkward juxtaposition of extreme devotion to God on the one hand, and glorification of the worldly authority on the other, finds echoes of confirmation in the broader Islamic world. Richard Ettinghausen has highlighted an analysis of Arabic inscriptions which characterises them as being ‘centred on one of the two predominant ideas in the Muslim world: divine power and absolute political authority. On the one hand, the Qur’an, invocations, and pious phrases, confessions of faith, mystical allusions, and prayers for the dead; on the other hand, the names of the sovereign, his titles, exploits, and his perpetual praise’ (Ettinghausen 1974, 297). The preoccupations of religious legends on Malay seals could hardly be summed up more eloquently.

Another notable aspect of the study of religious legends on Malay seals is the observation that quite a number of states have adopted

what could be termed distinctive dynastic mottoes for the seals of their sovereigns which are unique to those polities within Southeast Asia, and thus instantly recognizable. These range from a particular sequence of Beautiful Names of God and a Qur'anic quotation (Selangor), a paraphrase of a Qur'anic quotation (Buton), a pious phrase (Bima), or even a particular esoteric guise of presentation with the use of disconnected letters (Pontianak). In Sulu it seemed incumbent upon rulers each to formulate a new religious legend utilising a Beautiful Name of God determined by the principle of assonance or rhyme with their regnal name. On the other hand, many other states have no particular distinguishing features and use a wide variety of religious legends. Some of the most original and sophisticated religious legends are found in Sulawesi, which may be connected to the fact that nearly all seal inscriptions here are written exclusively in Arabic, and without any elements in Malay or indigenous languages, as is the more common practice in most states in Nusantara.

The question as to why certain religious expressions were adopted in particular states has to be investigated cautiously and within the full context of political, social and cultural as well as religious developments of the place and time. In some cases, it is possible that hints may be found in the (memories of) histories of the Islamisation of particular regions. For example, as noted above, in nearly all Malay seals the emphasis of the religious legend is the personal relationship between the seal holder and God, founded on total confidence and trust in Him, and only very rarely are other Islamic figures mentioned. Thus the 17th-century seal of Karaeng Karunrung Abdul Hamid of Tallo' is quite unusual in appealing for the intercession of the Prophet in his address to God: *Bi al-nabiy al-muṣṭafá yā Wadūd kann li-Abdul Hamid ibn Mahmud Karaeng Karunrung sanat 1065*, 'By the prophet, the chosen one, O Loving One, protect Abdul Hamid, son of Mahmud, Karaeng Karunrung, the year 1065 (1654/5)' (1756). Islam was brought to Tallo' by the Minangkabau preacher Datuk ri Bandang, and the ruler, Karaeng Katangka, was converted in 1605, taking the name Sultan Abdullah Awaluddin. According to local tradition, while Karaeng Katangka was on his way to the port to greet Datuk ri Bandang, the Prophet himself appeared in the guise of an old man, and wrote the *Surat al-Fātiḥah* on his finger tip.<sup>11</sup> This momentous episode is memorialised in a Makassarese saying, *Makkasara'mi Nabbi*

*Muhammad ri buttaya ri Tallo* ('The Prophet Muhammad was manifest in Tallo') (Sewang 2005, 98). Might this tradition be linked with the invoking of the Prophet on the seal of Karaeng Karunrung, grandson of Karaeng Katangka, just half a century after, and hence within living memory, of the Islamisation of Tallo'?

Perhaps a more certain avenue for exploration in seeking to interpret certain religious elements on the seals of specific states is the impact of the return to Southeast Asia of charismatic and influential religious scholars cloaked with the authority of long periods of study in the Islamic heartlands of the Middle East.<sup>12</sup> Already mentioned above is the adoption of 'Abbāsīd-style *alqab* or titles by the sultans of Banjar in the early 19th century, and it is possible that this innovation may be linked with the arrival back in Banjarmasin in 1773, after nearly four decades of study in the Haramayn, of Syaikh Muhammad Arsyad al-Banjari (Azra 2004, 117–20; Daud 1997, 53–55). He was welcomed with great respect by the ruler Sultan Tahmidullah, and granted an area of land in Martapura for his household and activities. There he set up an Islamic school, the first formal Islamic educational establishment in the region, and with the support of the sultan reformed the administration of Islamic justice in the state and established the office of *Mufti*. The first sultan to ascend the throne of Banjar following the return of Syaikh Muhammad Arsyad was Sultan Sulaiman al-Mu'tamid 'alallāh (r.1801, 1808-1825), who adopted as part of his regnal name the *laqab* of the 'Abbāsīd caliph who held power from 870-892. It is thus very likely that Syaikh Muhammad Arsyad, as the highest source of Islamic authority in Banjar, was instrumental in this decision. All subsequent sultans of Banjar also adopted similar 'Abbāsīd *alqāb*, until the sultanate was abolished by the Dutch in 1859.

The case of Banjarmasin suggests that for those states in Southeast Asia associated with certain distinctive religious formulae on their (mostly) sovereign seals, the critical period for investigation is around the introduction of these phrases, to see whether this can be correlated with significant episodes in the politico-religious life of that state. Once a distinctive religious expression had been introduced onto sovereign seals – perhaps through the influence of an authoritative religious figure – it not surprising to find it retained over a very long period, to the extent of becoming an identifying feature of the royal seals of that state.



Figure 7. The seal of Syaikh Yusuf of Makassar, inscribed *Shaykh al-Hāj Yusuf al-Tāj 1088*. Contract between Gowa and the Dutch, 26 February 1738. Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, Makassar 274/4 (a). (Gallop 2019, 1719)

Finally, it should be reiterated that this article has been limited to considering the explicitly religious expressions found in the inscriptions on 734 Malay seals from Southeast Asia. On many other of the 2,168 Malay seals documented in the recent catalogue (Gallop 2019), seemingly secular aspects of the inscription such as names and titles may in fact be religiously laden, as perfectly evoked by the seal of one of the most eminent *‘alim* from Southeast Asia: Syaikh Yusuf of Makassar. His seal was made in 1677 in Banten, where he settled after his return from two decades of study in the Middle East, and is inscribed simply *Shaykh al-Hāj Yusuf al-Tāj 1088*, ‘The Haji Shaykh, Yusuf, the Crown, 1088 (1677/8) (1719) (Figure 7). As such, this seal does not contain a specifically religious legend, but its short inscription is nevertheless imbued with religiosity. This is the earliest known Malay seal to contain the title *al-Hāj*, affirming performance of the fifth pillar of Islam, while Yusuf’s epithet *al-Tāj* refers to the title *al-Tāj al-Khalwātī*, ‘The Crown of the Khalwātī’, conferred by his teacher in Damascus on his graduation from the Khalwatiyyah Sufi brotherhood (Azra 2004, 92; Hamid 1994, 93). This seal is therefore a salient reminder of the Islamic cloak enveloping almost every single aspect of Malay seals from the Islamic world of Southeast Asia, in addition to any explicitly religious expressions they might contain.

## Endnotes

1. Balādhurī in *Futūḥ al-Buldān*, cited in Porter 2011: 1, who also gives other classical Muslim references to the Prophet's seal.
2. In this article, Middle Eastern names are given with full diacritics, but Southeast Asian names and titles follow accepted local usage, eg. *Sulṭān Abd al-Raḥmān* for an Arab, but *Sultan Abdul Rahman* for a Malay.
3. Hereafter, numbers in bold refer to the seal catalogue numbers in Gallop (2019).
4. Sources consulted include studies of Islamic seals by Reinaud (1828), Hammer-Purgstall (1850), Grohman (1952) and Gignoux & Kalus (1982), and the catalogues of Islamic seals in the National Museum of Hungary (Fehér 1959), the Topkapı Saray (Uzuncarsili 1959), the Iraq Museum (Naqshabandi and al-Horri 1974), the Bibliothèque nationale (Kalus 1981), the Ashmolean Museum (Kalus 1986), the Zucker collection (Content 1987; Kalus 1987) and of seal rings in the Khalili collection (Wenzel 1993). Most of these catalogues simply record the inscription and dimensions of the seals; the most important recent development in Islamic sigillography is the catalogue by Porter (2011) of 800 Arabic and Persian seals and amulets in the British Museum, where clusters of inscriptions are categorised with comments on their historical contexts.
5. The 'Abbāsīd caliphate flourished in Baghdad from 749-1258, and then, following the Mongol invasion, in Cairo 1261-1517. The regnal titles and reign dates of 'Abbāsīd caliphs are taken from Bosworth (1980, 7–8).
6. The English translations of the divine Names used in this article are taken from Codrington (1904) and Redhouse (1880).
7. For a full list of Beautiful Names found on Malay seals, see Gallop (2002, 212–13).
8. A full chart of Qur'anic quotations found on 59 Malay seals is given in Gallop (2002, 214–15, 2019, 777). The translations used here are based on the edition of Abdullah Yusuf Ali (2007).
9. The choice of this verse as Aurangzib's *tughnā* was also attributed to the fact that the total value of the summation of the *abjad* values of the individual letters which make up this Qur'anic verse totalled 1067, the date of his accession to the throne (Khan 1994, 50).
10. Cf. Canaan (1937, 73, 76); for examples of seals and talismans see Kalus (1981, 80), Content (1987, 325), Wenzel (1993, 286–87).
11. This episode recalls the account of the coming of Islam to Pasai in the Malay chronicle *Hikayat Raja Pasai*. The night before a preacher sent from Mecca arrived in Pasai, the Prophet himself appeared to the ruler Merah Silu in a dream, and converted him to Islam by spitting into his mouth. When Merah Silu awoke, he proclaimed the *shahadah* and found he was circumcised, and took the name Sultan Malik al-Salih (Jones 1999, 15).
12. The importance of these networks of scholars (*jaringan ulama*) was first highlighted by Azra (2004), but as Fathurahman (2016, 2) has shown, many more lesser-known trajectories, such as pathways within Java, or to more distant regions such as Mindanao, remain to be documented.

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4. Wahid, Din. 2014. *Nurturing Salafi Manhaj: A Study of Salafi Pesantrens in Contemporary Indonesia*. PhD dissertation. Utrecht University.
5. Utriza, Ayang. 2008. "Mencari Model Kerukunan Antaragama." *Kompas*. March 19: 59.
6. Ms. *Undhang-Undhang Banten*, L.Or.5598, Leiden University.
7. Interview with K.H. Sahal Mahfudz, Kajen, Pati, June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

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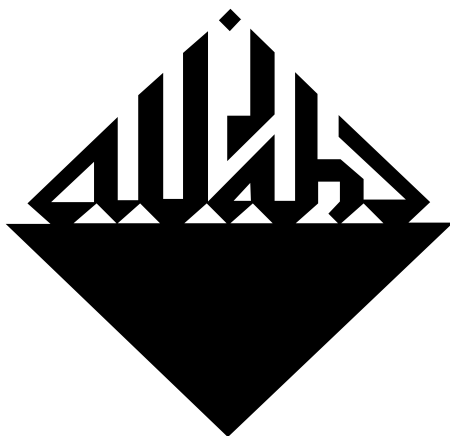


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السنة الثامنة والعشرون، العءء ١، ٢٠٢١



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## THE PREDICAMENTS OF MUSLIMS IN THE PHILIPPINES: AN EXPOSITION OF SAID NURSI'S HYPOTHESIS VIS-À-VIS HIZMET MOVEMENT APPROACH

Jamel Rombo Cayamodin & Abdulhamit Durakoglu

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## THE SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF HINDU AND MUSLIM COMMUNITIES: THE PRACTICE OF "MENYAMA-BRAYA" IN CONTEMPORARY BALI

I Gst. Pt. Bagus Suka Arjawa & Zulkifli

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السجانر وشبكة العلماء المصريين  
في نوسانتارا: ءراساء في مخطوط  
«باءء في بيان حكم شرب الكخان»  
جاءانغ أراحمانا

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