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Exceptions to the Rule: Malay Seals in Manuscript Books

Seals in Islamic manuscripts

Islamic manuscript books sometimes contain ownership inscriptions and seals, usually found on the preliminary pages before the start of the text, or on the final pages.¹ These seals, which were impressed by the owners, readers, librarians or custodians of the book, can be of crucial importance in tracing the peregrinations of some manuscripts through centuries and even across continents, and a study of seals in manuscripts can also help to reconstruct the holdings of dispersed libraries.

The use of seals in Islamic manuscripts is reasonably common – according to a preliminary estimate, nearly a quarter of the Muslim manuscripts in the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies in Russia bear seals (Polosin & Rezvan 1997:54) – but there were of course regional and temporal variations. Among the greatest royal exponents of the practice were the Mughal emperors of India, and nearly all known surviving manuscripts from the imperial library bear inscriptions and seals (Seyller 1997:243-4). Seals are found not only in manuscripts from royal libraries, but also in those from religious colleges and in the private collections of scholars and authors.

Seals in Islamic manuscripts functioned in several ways, the most common of which was to identify the owner of the book. One of the most august such Islamic manuscripts is the great Shahnama of the 15th-century Timurid

¹. On this practice see Richard 2000; Caeck 1987.
prince Muhammad Juki, which bears on a frontispiece the seals of no fewer than five of the Mughal emperors: Babur, Humayun, Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb (Wilkinson 1931:3). Ownership could also be denoted by an institutional seal or a specific "library" seal designed especially for use on books belonging to an individual, such as that of Sultan Muhammad Shah II of Bengal (r.1442-1451) (Desai 1993:59). Sometimes the ownership status of manuscripts was identified by means of special waqf seals, which were stamped in books to denote their alienation in perpetuity in favour of a pious foundation. Such seals were already in use in Tabriz, Persia, in the early 14th century (Richard 2000:356), but are particularly associated with Ottoman manuscripts from the 16th century onwards. Special waqf seals were engraved for each of the Ottoman sultans (cf. Kut & Bayrakhtar 1984), and can be seen stamped on the frontispieces of royal manuscripts in the Topkapi Palace Museum (Artan 2000:93). Seals were also stamped in books for other reasons, for example to record that the manuscript had been read from beginning to end, as in books belonging to a famous bibliophile of Gujarat, Sayyid Jafar Badri-i-Alam (Desai 1993:54). In royal Mughal manuscripts, in addition to the many seals of owners we also find seals of the librarians charged with the care of the books (Seyller 1997:254). A special category of manuscripts with seals are Ottoman seal albums, in which collections of seal impressions were assembled.\(^2\)

**Notable by their absence: Malay seals in manuscript books**

A recent study of Malay seals – defined as seals from Southeast Asia with inscriptions at least partially in Arabic script or in the Malay language – has yielded over 1,600 seals from all over the Malay archipelago, dating from around 1600 to the early 20th century (Gallop 2002). Malay seals can certainly be regarded as a subset of the broader family of Islamic seals, characterised by the presence of an inscription in Arabic script. However, only 35 of the Malay seals documented are impressed in books, the vast majority being found on documents such as letters and treaties. The low numbers of seals in books and the evidence of extant manuscript volumes all suggest that the tradition of stamping seals in manuscript books never really took root in the Malay world.

The lack of such a Southeast Asian Islamic tradition is highlighted by the conspicuous scarcity of seals precisely where they are most prominent in some other Islamic cultures, namely in royal libraries. A rare example of this practice is the use of the seal of Sultan Syarif Hamid of Pontianak (r.1855-1872) \(^3\) in three Malay manuscript texts – *Kitab tarekat Nakasyabandah* (Figure 1), *Hikayat Inderaputera* and *Kitab hukum akal* – all now held in the National Library of Malaysia. Yet in the British Library, none of Javanese manuscripts seized from the court of Yogyakarta in 1812 or Bugis manuscripts captured from the court of Bone in 1814 bear royal seals of ownership. The remnants of the court library of Banten, which was purchased in 1832 by the Dutch East Indies Government and is now held in the National Library of Indonesia, yield several 18th-century royal ownership inscriptions in Javanese in pegon (Arabic) script, but none are accompanied by seals. Indeed, a mystical treatise of the Naqshbandiya tarekat from the royal library of Palengbang, which bears the seal of Prabu Anum – later Sultan Ahmad Najmuddin III (r.1819, 1821-1823) \(^4\) (1676) (Figure 2) could be regarded as the archetypal exception which proves the rule. As shown by Iskandar (1986:71), various annotations on the initial page reveal that the seal was not impressed in the book by the prince himself, but by the Dutch soldier who appropriated this and several other manuscripts when the palace was seized in 1824. He is identified in these notes as J.J. Kramers:


“*A souvenir from J.J. Kramers – Corp. Born on the 3rd March 1805 in Amsterdam. This present was captured on 22 November 1824 during the attack on the Sultan of Palembang by J.J. Kramers, Corp. of the 1st Batt. 2 Comp. 5 R. Art.*”

To the left of this note is the seal of Prabu Anum (impressed upside down), above which is a note which throws some light on Kramers’s interest in this royal seal:

*dit Zegel is de mark die de Sultanan gedan heeft om alle Europeesche magieën te vermoeden*.

“this seal is the mark with which the Sultan ordered the execution of all European officials.”

The fact that the seal is stamped in the same grey ink as that in which Kramers wrote these notes is further confirmation that it was indeed he who impressed the seal. Malay seals are usually impressed in lampblack rather than ink, and although there is a tradition of the use of red ink in certain states the use of grey ink is very rare.

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3. Numbers preceded by a hash sign (#) denote the unique seal record number used in the catalogue of Malay seals (Gallop 2002: Appendices). A full description of all the seals recorded in this article can be found at www.malaysseals.org.

4. I am most grateful to Christopher Buyers for this information (pers. e-comm., 27 November 2003).
The various functions of Malay seals in books

Since few Malay seals have been found stamped in books, each seal-bearing manuscript has been "interrogated" in order to ascertain the significance of the seal.

The study shows that, in line with general Islamic practice, when a Malay seal does occur in a manuscript volume it normally serves to indicate ownership of the book. Thus the seal of Haji Wan Abdullah bin Haji Wan Muhammad Amin (#1038), the 19th-century mufti of Terengganu better known as Tok Syaikh Duyung, is said to be stamped in all the books in his extensive library in the possession of his descendants (Mohamad 1984:56). Manuscripts often remained within families, and a manuscript of Kitab Abda‘u in the Royal Asiatic Society (RAS Maxwell 80) which bears the seal of Haji Muhammad Hasan al-Khatib (#1630) also carries an ownership inscription by his son, Encik Muhammad Ali bin al-Haj Muhammad Hasan Khatib. This seal is also found in another RAS manuscript (Maxwell 87) of the Idrak al-albab, demonstrating the role of seals in helping to identify manuscripts from the same library. Similarly, the use of the same seal of Abdul Rahim bin Abdul Kadir (#1658) (Figure 3) enables the linking of two manuscripts long separated by space and time: one is a work on raitib now held in the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde in Leiden, acquired in 1877 from J.J. Korndörffer, a naval officer who had served in Aceh (Figure 4), while the other is a collection of religious texts recently acquired by the National Library of Malaysia (Figure 5). Especially striking is the identical graphical context of the seal, which in both manuscripts is stamped in the middle of the blank space above the opening lines of the text, almost as if functioning as a decorative “headpiece” to the text. That aesthetic considerations were sometimes as important as propitious ones in the use of Malay seals in manuscript books is also suggested by the artful placing of seals in two royal manuscripts in the Muzium Negeri Kelantan. A manuscript of the Hikayat Bajian Budiman dated 1879 and a copy of the Hikayat Rukhsit each bear several impressions of a small oval seal reading Raja Muda Kelantan (#1062), arranged precisely and symmetrically within the simple decorative headpiece at the start of each book.

In some cases, the seals identify not only the owner of the book, but also the author or copyist. Thus the seal of Syaikh Omar Basheer (#1498) — imam of the Acheen Street Mosque in Penang — is found in his financial record book (Figure 6) and his personal diary covering the Penang riots of 1867, both now held in the Muzium Negeri Pulau Pinang. Similarly, an anthology of religious texts in the Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia (MSS 2488) copied by Mahmud ibn Muhammad Yusuf al-Terquani (i.e. Terengganu) in 1839 bears his own seal (#1619) on the first and final page. It is possible that the seals found in some small religious texts from Aceh are also those of owner-copy-
Figure 3. A seal inscribed "1259 Abdul Rahim bin Abdul Karim, umrah 51," "1259 (1843/4) Abdul Rahim, son of Abdul Karim, his age 51" (1847). This is the only known Malay seal to mention the sealholder's age. Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde, 1875.

Figure 4. A work on redif, stamped with the seal of Abdul Rahim (1847). The manuscript was acquired in 1877 from J.J. Körnersoller, a naval officer who had served in Aceh. Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde, 1875.

Figure 5. The seal of Abdul Rahim (1847) stamped in a manuscript containing religious texts, recently acquired from Aceh. Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia, MSS 2978.
ists. The manuscripts, which bear the hallmarks of books compiled for personal use, yield the seals of Syam Lebai Malim (#1389), Muhammad Said bin Syarik Abas (#1637), Teuku Kerkun Mukin Tiga (#1598) and Haji Muhammad Idris (#1638). In the case of the last seal, found in an anthology of religious texts (PNRI ML375), two impressions are arranged decoratively on either side of the cusped dome of the headpiece at the start of the text, with a third seal just below the illuminated tailpiece at the end. In a Javanese pawukan manuscript in the Bodleian Library (MS Jav.d.2), a small Malay seal inscribed in symmetrical mirror script (#1222) impressed on the lower right corner of one of the thirty full-page paintings may even identify the artist.

In two manuscripts presented to Dutch officials, the seals within serve to identify the donors. A Javanese manuscript of the *Taj al-Sulatan* now held in the Nationaal Archief in Den Haag bears a bilingual inscription in Malay and Javanese recording the sending of the volume by Panembahan Mangku Adiningrat of Pamekasan in Madura to “Tuan Kursusan” in Batavia, for presentation to the Commissary General of the Netherlands Indies. Below the inscription are three separate round seals of the Panembahan: a Malay seal with inscription in Arabic (#1020), one inscribed in Roman script in Dutch, and one in Javanese script; their artful arrangement in a row — with the Dutch seal in the centre — exploiting to the full the inherently striking visual impact of seals. In the second manuscript, the sealholder is not only the presenter of the gift but is himself the subject of the text. A manuscript copy of the Syair Pangeran Syarif Hasyim — said to have been versified from his own journal by Engku Raja al-Haj Daud ibn Ahmad in Pulau Penyengat in 1870 — bears on the title page a presentation inscription to C. C. Tromp, the Resident of South and East Kalmantau, with the seal and signature of the Pangeran himself (#1444).

A seal impressed not in a manuscript but in an lithographed book published in Singapore in 1898 appears to bear witness to a tussle over copyright. The colophon of a copy of the Syair Azhar al-Tasdid carries a manuscript annotation in ink: al-Haj Muhammad Apip bin al-Haj Mahin Banjar yang guna karangan ini syair, “al-Haj Muhammad Apip, son of al-Haj Mahmud, of Banjar, is the owner of this poem”, and is accompanied by his small seal (#343). The significance of this otherwise very rare example of a proprietor’s seal only becomes clear when we find that the printed title page, which assigns copyright to the publisher, Haji Muhammad Amin, has been covered over with glued paper (Proudlite 1993:133).

5. ARA Collectie 137, L.P.G. de Bus de Ghisignies, Nummer Toegang 2.21.035, item no.235. I am most grateful to Rainy Chê-Row for bringing this manuscript to my attention, and for supplying me with a photocopy of the page with the seals after his visit to the Algemeene Rijksarchief (now the Nationaal Archief) on 25 January 2002 (pers. comm., February 2002).
Thus while most of the few Malay seals found in books serve to identify the owner, some further reflect a more intimate relationship between the book and the seallholder, who may also have been the author, artist, copyist, patron, subject or proprietor. However, there are also a small number of Malay seals in books which, while still functioning as marks of ownership, on closer investigation reveal further unexpected dimensions to their use.

The political statement from Riau: Raja Ali’s seal in the Mukhtasar Tawarikh al-Wusta

One of the most significant examples of a seal in a Malay manuscript book is the placing of the seal of Raja Ali, Viceroy of Riau, in the colophon of a manuscript of the Mukhtasar Tawarikh al-Wusta, “Abridged version of the Middle Chronicle”, dated 1854. This has been interpreted as giving the manuscript “the seal of approval” and serving to confirm the provenance of this manuscript, which is said to be abridged from a copy of the Tawarikh al-Wusta held by the Viceroy himself (Tol & Witkam 1993:vi, viii). Yet on closer inspection – and in view of the scarcity of seals in royal Malay manuscripts – the reason for the stamping of the seal on this compendium of history and customary practice from Riau appears to be related specifically to the content of the manuscript itself, rather than for a general validating purpose.

Following the Treaty of London of 1824 between Great Britain and the Netherlands which effectively divided the ancient kingdom of “Johor Pahang Riau Lingga” into two, a new treaty was drawn up on 29 October 1830 between the Dutch and Sultan Abdul Rahman Syah of “Lingga, Riau and the dependencies”, with both sides appointing plenipotentiaries to act on their behalf (Hebben tot hunne gevolmachtigden benoemd te weten / Maka telah sudah berdiri memberi kuasa akan menjadi wakil mutlaknya pada membuat perjanjian baru ini). C.P.J. Elout for the Dutch, and for the Sultan, the Yang Dipertuan Muda Raja Jafar and Tengku Besar, the son of the Sultan (ANRI 1970:70-1). Grave offence was apparently caused by the choice of the term wakil mutlak in this context for the Bugis Yang Dipertuan Muda, as is clear from a vituperative rebuttal in the fifth and last section of the Mukhtasar Tawarikh al-Wusta, described in the list of contents as fasal yang kelima pada menyatakan makna wakil yang tersebut di dalam kontrak perjanjian dengan Olanda (Tol & Witkam 1993:viii), “the fifth section, on the meaning of [the term] ‘representative’ (wakil) also used in the contract with the Dutch.” According to this text, as the Sultan was then in Lingga, the only appropriate use of the word wakil in this treaty was to describe the authority granted to

6. LUB Cod.Or.1999, p.24; the complete manuscript has been reproduced in facsimile by Tol & Witkam (1993), and the page with the seal is also illustrated on the front cover.

his son Tengku Besar and to the Yang Dipertuan Muda to represent him at the negotiations in Penang. It was both insolting and completely wrong to suggest that the Yang Dipertuan Muda had been entrusted with the authority to represent Riau and its dependencies (mewakilkan Riau dengan segala daerah takluknya), for by virtue of his office the Yang Dipertuan [Muda] was the ruler of Riau.

In the context of this study, the most interesting point is that the wording of the Yang Dipertuan Muda’s seal is then invoked to show that he is a ruler in his own right, and nobody’s ‘representative’ or ‘deputy’:

Sebab tidak tiada tersebut “wakil” itu kepada capnya, adalah tersebut di dalam capnya demikian bunyinya “al-wathiq bi-Rab al-arsh Yang Dipertuan Muda ana” atau “Raja Muda ana”, demikianlah tapi-tapi cap Yang Dipertuan itu, tiada menyebabkan “wakil” di dalamnya di mana inge. Sangka orang yang dengar dan boleh itu mengatakan mewa-

Simultaneously illustrating, verifying, validating and concluding this occasion, impressed on the same page of the manuscript is the seal of Raja Ali, the 8th Yang Dipertuan Muda (r.1845-1857), its inscription in accordance with that prescribed in the text above: al-wathiq bi-Rabb al-arsh Raja Muda ibn al-marhum Yang Dipertuan Muda Raja Jafar sanat 1261 // RADJA ALIE ONDER-KONING van RIOWU, “He who trusts in the Lord of the throne, Raja Muda, son of the late Yang Dipertuan Muda Raja Jafar, the year 1261 (AD 1845/6) // Radja Alie, Viceroy of Riowu” (#111).

That there was some Dutch involvement in the commissioning or production of this manuscript is clear from the fact that the text is presented in both Jawi script and Roman transliteration, and it has been suggested that a government administrator such as Eliza Nestscher may have been the instigator (Tol & Witkam 1993:x). In this context, the inclusion of pasal lima in this abridged version of the Tawarikh al-Wusta may be attributed to the Viceroy’s desire to “clarify” to the Dutch government the nature of his power vis-à-vis the sultan’s.

Three seals of Raja Ali have been traced, all of which have the shape of an 8-petalled circle: two large official seals, and a smaller personal seal.
Both the large seals are the same size and have essentially the same inscription, but one is wholly in Jawi (#134) and was granted to Raja Ali by the Sultan on his installation as Raja Muda in on 20 July 1845, as described in the last lines of a copy of the Hikayat Negeri Johor belonging to Raja Ali himself:

\[\text{Al-turikh sanat 1261 kepadalima belas hari bulan Rajah yaitu pada malam Abdi waktum jam pukul tiga. Dewasa itulah Kehawah Duli Baginda Yang Dipertuan Besar Sultan Mahmud al-Muzaffar Syah keramatian kita cap dengan nama Raja Muda serta menangkung konterak yaitu setia dengan kerabat kerajaan dari setia antara kita dan Kehawah Duli Baginda adanya (LUB K524, p.40, quoted in Tel & Witkin 1993:x1.2)}\]

“In the year 1261, on the 15th of Rajab, on Saturday at 3 o’clock in the afternoon, at that time His Majesty Sultan Mahmud al-Muzaffar Syah bestowed upon me a seal with the title of Vicerey, returned the copy of the treaty with the Dutch government, and also presented me with a copy of my loyal agreement with His Majesty.”

The other large seal bears an additional border inscription in Dutch (#111), and would have been presented to the Vicerey by the Resident soon after his installation as a sign of the Dutch approval of his appointment; this is the seal found in the manuscript under discussion.

The Chinese connection: the seals of Muhammad Cing Saidullah

Muhammad Cing Saidullah was a scribe working at the General Secretariat in Batavia, whose name is well-known from numerous Malay manuscripts which he copied. In one manuscript his name is given in

7. The procedure is well documented in the case of Raja Ali’s predecessor and brother, Raja Abdul Rahman. On 15 January 1833, the Resident of Riau wrote to the Sultan of Lingga, conveying the Governor-General’s approval of the choice of Abdul Rahman as vicerey, and adding: “Ook commannicer ik mijnen vriend dat zijne Excelleentie den Heer Gouverneur General een zegel cachtet voor de onderkoning van Riau, met deel heetzelver als geschenk van wege Zijne Excelleentie aan Raja Abdul Rachman aan te bieden aan wiene ik hetzelfde ook zal overhandigen zoo dra den Prins tot de waardigheid van onderkoning zal zijn verheven. ‘I furthermore inform my friend that His Excellency the Governor General has sent me a seal for the vicerey of Riau, ordering [me] to offer it as a present on behalf of His Excellency to Raja Abdul Rachman to whom I deliver it as soon as he is installed as vicerey.’ ANRI Riau 212. Copieën van briefe van den Resident aan groten. I am most grateful to Jan van der Putten for this quotation and the translation. Raja Abdul Rachman’s ‘Dutch’ seal is exactly the same shape as Raja Ali’s and reads: al-wakil fi-rabbb al-‘asr Raja Muda ibn Yang Dipertuan Muda Raja Jafar al-maham sanat 1248 (AD 1832/3) / RADAJ ABDUL RACHMAN ONDERKONING van RIJO (AD #141).”

8. I would like to take the opportunity to express my thanks to Claudine Salmon, my colleagues Frances Wood and Graham Flint of the Chinese collections in the British Library, and Henri Chambert-Loir, for their very helpful comments on this section; any shortcomings are entirely my responsibility.

9. Wieringa (1998:523) lists ten manuscripts in LUB which either bear the name of Muhammad Cing Saidullah or which appear to be in his hand; Rukm (1997:28-30) mentions four others with his name in the KITLV and PNRI.

Roman characters as “Luitnant Tjng Satedollah Mohd. Edries”; while the Government Almanac refers to a “Mochamad Tjong Naim Baktie Najia Widjaja” as “Komandant der Wester Javanen” in Batavia from 1822 to 1827. Voorhoeve – to whom we are indebted for this information – concluded that Muhammad Cing Saidullah was a man from western Java, head of the western Javanese at Batavia until 1827, and at the same time occupied as a copyist of Malay manuscripts at the Bureau of Native Affairs at the General Secretariat, which work he continued even after he had lost his “military” position owing to a reorganization of the corps of native officers in 1827 (Voorhoeve 1964:260-1). On the basis of the middle element of his name, it has been assumed that Muhammad Cing Saidullah was of Chinese descent (Prouduit & Hooker 1996:204); further support for this proposition comes from a manuscript in the van der Tusk bequest in Leiden University Library described as Surat hitungan orang Arab dan orang Cina (LUB Cod.Or.3386, W.III), written by Muhammad Tjng Sa’dullah, eerste leuton Muhammad Tjng Saidullah kelerek alhemin sekretari pensioenin adanya, on 19 February 1846 (Iskandar 1999:181). If Muhammad Cing did indeed have Chinese ancestry, there is an intriguing cultural footnote to his use of seals.

Two different seals of Muhammad Cing Saidullah are known, both impressed in a manuscript of the Hikayat Paspa Wiraja, the copying of which was completed on 26 March 1822 at Krukut in Batavia10. On the title page is a round intaglio seal (#101), inscribed with its initials in stylized Roman letters, M T S, and his full name in Jawi script, Muhammad Cing Saidullah, surrounded by a linked chain carved in relief (Figure 7). On the colophon is another seal (#100), a vertical oval, carved in relief, with the inscription only in Jawi script, Muhammad Cing Saidullah, surrounded by the same linked chain within an oval frame (Figure 8).

Although Muhammad Cing is known to have copied many manuscripts, these are the only known examples of his seals, suggesting that this manuscript, at least, was owned by him personally, rather than being one copied on commission for the General Secretariat (Rukm 1997:29). The seals thus signify both his ownership and his creation of the manuscript, while that on the title page even appears to perform a textual function, for the seal legend (underlined) could be read as a continuation of the inscription: Bahawa ini hikayat Siam yang empunya di Krukut Muhammad Cing Saidullah, “This is a story about Siam, the owner in Krukut is Muhammad Cing Saidullah.”

10. LUB Cod.Or.1401; for facsimile reproductions of the pages containing the seals, see Wieringa 1998:23-24.

11. The eponymous hero of this hikayat, Paspa Wiraja, was said to be a King of Siam (Wieringa 1998:22).
Perhaps most striking is the fact that Muhammad Cing used two seals, one carved in intaglio and the other in relief. Most Malay, and indeed, most other Islamic seals are carved in intaglio, where the inscription is incised into the surface of the seal matrix, giving when stamped a white inscription against a coloured background. Only 6% of all Malay seals are carved in relief – where the background is carved away on the seal matrix, leaving the inscription standing proud, and therefore giving a black or coloured inscription when stamped, against a white background – and most of these date from the late 19th century onwards, in line with the moderising tendency towards relief-cut rubber stamps. Of the 880 Malay seals documented before 1850, this is one of only nine seals – just 1% – known to have been carved in relief.

Seals are found on Chinese books and manuscripts but have a very special role in the great Chinese tradition of painting and calligraphy. The use of signatures and seals in Chinese paintings probably began during the Northern Sung dynasty (960-1127), around the same time that the use of collectors’ seals also became popular. Imperial and official seals were traditionally cut in relief, but intaglio and relief carving were equally popular for private seals, and some artists had pairs of seals, one in each style (Chang 1976:xxvii). Until the Ming dynasty there was a tradition that personal name seals were cut in yin-wen or intaglio, and ‘fancy’ name seals with whimsical or pseudonymous names were cut in yang-wen or relief, but with the Qing dynasty the distinction was no longer observed (Contag & Wang 1966:xxv). While some painters would sign their works just with signatures, others would also affix a seal or even a number of different seals, while on the same paintings can also be found the seals of the connoisseurs into whose hands they passed, thus many Chinese paintings contain a plethora of seals (Contag & Wang 1966:xi-xii). These conventions are also followed in Islamic calligraphic scrolls from China, which sometimes bear the seals of the artist, in Chinese or Arabic, and in intaglio or relief (Garnaut 2006). Artistic considerations were as important as validating ones in the positioning of seals on paintings:

“A seal after the artist’s name at the end of a poetic inscription complements the signature and puts the finishing touch to a piece. Sometimes another seal beneath or near the first is needed to complete the visual cadence. A seal or two quietly placed in a vacant corner of a painting may serve to enhance the total impression rather than detract from it. The contrast between the vermillion and the black ink is always unfailingly striking, while the impact of a relief seal in close proximity to another in intaglio is more subtle, but equally pleasing.” (Chang 1976:xviii-xix).

It is possible that it was an echo of the Chinese tradition which influenced Muhammad Cing Saidullah, both in his decision to have made a pair of seals made in intaglio and relief, and in the degree of care and artistry with which he impressed them in his own work of art, at the beginning and at the end of the manuscript. It may also be significant that the seals were impressed in ink (the traditional Chinese seal medium, albeit not in the more usual vermillion) rather than the customary Malay lampblack.

**Seal designs by Tuanku Raja Keumala of Aceh**

In Leiden University Library there is a small manuscript (Cod.Or.8155) of 12 pages of the *Ca’c Hadat*, an Acehnese rendering of an Arabic poem. On the covers are 11 impressions of the small oval seal of Tuanku Raja Keumala (5/69), the son of Tuanku Hasyim Bangta Muda. Tuanku Hasyim was the younger brother of Sultan Alauddin Mahmud Syah of Aceh (r.1870-1874) and regent to the young Sultan Alauddin Muhammad Daud Syah (1874-1903). After the Dutch invasion of Aceh in 1874, the court moved to Keumala in Pidie, where it was based until Keumala fell to the Dutch in 1898 and the royal entourage was scattered. This manuscript is part of a collection of papers found in the camp of the Panglima Polim in 1899.

The use of the seal of Tuanku Raja Keumala suggests that this manuscript had been his property (Voorhoeve 1994:204), but there may also be another reason for the presence of these seal impressions. Scattered over the back cover are a number of hand-drawn seal sketches in black ink, while a more elaborate one is found on the inside back cover (Figure 9), in the form of a circle with two concentric borders, which reads:

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12. For a more detailed discussion of the use of relief engraving in Malay seals and in other seals from the Islamic world, see Gallop 2004.
Malay Seals in Manuscript Books

The authentic sign of the Habib Ahmad of Alur Ketapang, 1316 (AD 1998/9) // “For us God suffices, and He is the best disposer of affairs” (Qur’an 3:173) // “The Best to protect and the Best to help” (Qur’an 8:40) // “There is no god but God” (Qur’an 47:19), the King, the Truth, the Manifest One, “Muhammad is the messenger of God” (Qur’an 48:29) ...

On the back cover are ten sketches, in varying degrees of completion, all for a smaller seal similar in size and composition to Tuanku Raja Keumala’s own seal (Figure 10). Here the inscription reads:

sahib al-Habib (or, in some sketches, al-Sayyid) Ahmad Alur Ketapang 1316
“The authentic sign of the Habib (or: the Sayyid) Ahmad of Alur Ketapang, 1316”

Most interesting is that two of these sketches are written in negative script, confirming that these sketches were intended as models for seal matrices. The question naturally arises as to who made the sketches, and who was the “Habib Ahmad” of “Alur Ketapang” named in the seal.

A clue may be found in some letters of Tuanku Raja Keumala from a decade hence, stamped with a new seal. On three letters of 1909 and 1910, under his seal inscribed Tuanku Raja Keumala bin Tuanku Hasyim Sanat 1323, “Tuanku Raja of Keumala, son of Tuanku Hasyim, year 1323 (AD 1909/10)” (#591), is his elegant signature, Tuanku Raja Keumala, followed by long-tailed mim, a standard abbreviation for the Arabic tama, “finals” (Gaec 1987:90), arranged in a triangular shape like the tapering colophon in a manuscript book (Figure 11). The hand of the signature and that of the seal are undoubtedly the same, as can be seen from small details such as a small downwards stroke at the top of the kaf of Tuanku and Keumala and the angle of the nib in Keumala, implying that Tuanku Raja Keumala himself designed his seal. Returning to the seal sketches in the manuscript, since we have evidence that Tuanku Raja Keumala designed his own seal dated AH 1323, it is possible that in view of his talent as a calligrapher it was he himself who drew the seal sketches for Habib Ahmad in his manuscript, using his own seal impressions as models. The precise identity of Habib Ahmad is not known, but a “Habib Ahmad” who had a seal dated AH 1315 (AD 1897/8) (#442) is known from a published letter (Hasjmy 1983:225, 238), while a religious leader called “Tengku Alue Keutapang” was killed in the last years of the Aceh war, in the early 20th century (Perang 1990:77).

Chancery practice in Ternate

The last group of manuscript books to be described is rather different from those discussed earlier, in that these books do not contain literary, historical or religious texts but rather copies of chancery documents. A
considerable portion of the royal archive of Ternate – partly in Malay and Dutch, but mostly in Ternatean in Arabic script – is now held in the National Library of Indonesia as Peti 113. 13 While mostly comprising documents such as letters and treaties, the collection also holds a number of volumes (codices), three of which contain seals. Peti 113 G 75a, listed as Buku cerita Sultan Aliuddin membekal budak (Jusuf 1980:91; Behrend 1998:433) is actually a volume of various court records in Ternatean relating to the reign of Sultan Tajul Muluk Amiruddin Iskandar Kaulain Syah (r.1823-1859). Found on five pages of this book is a state seal of Ternate, inscribed al-malik fi balad al-Ternate, “The king of the state of Ternate” (#1640). It should be noted that Ternate is relatively unusual amongst Malay states in employing a succession of official state seals, as opposed to personal seals of individual rulers, from at least the early 19th century onwards. As in this seal, the ruler is denoted by a generic title of kingship rather than by his individual regnal name, and the seals were used by successive sultans of Ternate.

Two other volumes in the archive, Peti 113 G 75b and Peti 113 G 717, both catalogued as Berbagai catatan arsip Sultan Ternate, “Various archives of the Sultans of Ternate” (Jusuf 1980:86; Behrend 1998:433), contain copies of royal letters or edicts from the sultan of Ternate, all written in Ternatean in Arabic script. In general, in volumes of scribal copies of Malay

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13. This collection is held in eight wooden boxes, labelled on the covers “Peti 113 A 1 - H 8”; the contents are briefly listed in Behrend (1998:432-34), where the boxes are referred to as “Peti 113 1-8”. A more detailed description of this archive can be found in Jusuf (1980), but access is hampered by the lack of an index by shelfmark.
letters, many of the ceremonial or diplomatic elements such as the letter heading and even the elaborate opening compliments (pujii-pujian) are left out, so although the contents are preserved, the letter bears little visual resemblance to the original of which it is a copy. These Ternate letterbooks, however, are quite different in that they were obviously compiled by the same scribes responsible for the writing of the original letters, and to a large extent they preserve the graphic layout of the original documents, including the distinctive monumental calligraphy associated with royal letters from Maluku, and the royal seal of state stamped in lampblack on each copy letter in the volume. Peti 113 G 7/3b also contains documents relating to Sultan Tajul Muluk Amiruddin Iskandar Kaulain Syah and contains 56 impressions of an undated state seal (No.366) which has been recorded in use at least between 1824 and 1898. Peti 113 G 7/17 is a volume of copy documents relating to Sultan Tajul Muluk Amir Iskandar Zainal Baharin, dating from 1812-1821 (Jusuf 1980:86); this volume yields 39 impressions of seal inscribed Muluk buldan Ternate sanat 1216, “The kings of the lands of Ternate, the year 1216 (AD 1801/2)” (No.365) (Figure 12). This seal was first recorded in use in the reign of Sultan Muhammad Yasin (1801-1807), and in view of its date may have been made for this ruler, but it continued in use by sovereigns of Ternate until at least 1911. As far as is known, this use of original seals in volumes of archival copy letters has not been documented elsewhere in the Malay world.

Conclusion

98% of all known Malay seals are found on letters and documents, and Malay seals in manuscript books are so rare as to be regarded as exceptions to the rule. A detailed study of the 35 Malay seals stamped in books documented so far reveals that these seals generally served as marks of “ownership” in the broadest sense, by identifying the owner, copyst, author, artist, patron or donor of a book. Yet in a considerable proportion of these books there is also a recurring impression that the aesthetic effect of a strategically-sited seal impression on the page was as significant as the authority conveyed by that seal. In a few manuscripts discussed in more detail above the seals function in even more singular ways, but however interesting the resulting vignettes, they have virtually nothing in common except that they all concern seals stamped in books. This can only strengthen the assertion made at the beginning of this

14. Particularly characteristic of royal letters from Maluku – from Tidore and Baco as well as from Ternate – is the superb calligraphy of the opening lines, and the way that the initial words comprising the sultan’s name are arranged calligraphically in a pyramidal mountain-like structure (for reproductions see Wierenga 1998:364, 367, 368).

15. See LUB Cod.Oc.17066, a manuscript dated 29 July 1911, where this seal is stamped in black ink.
paper that, as far as can be gleaned from the evidence, there was never a tradition of stamping seals in manuscript books in the Malay world, and that most such cases are exceptional in one way or another.

If we persist in trying to discern a pattern to the use of Malay seals in books, one common factor to some of the seals used to signify ownership is that the sealholders tend to be members of the religious fraternity, identified through titles like haji, lebai, khatib and syaikh. It should be noted that in striking contrast to the situation in the Middle East, where the use of seals was widespread at all social levels, in the traditional Malay world the granting of a seal was a royal prerogative, and the use of seals was more or less restricted to court hierarchies. It was only with the spread of Dutch authority in the 19th century that the constituency of sealholders expanded rapidly to include officials in the colonial administrative system, including those at village level. Outside these two main camps of state officials, the only other notable group of Malay sealholders comprised religious figures. This may be attributed to their closer contact with the central Islamic world through the haji and extended periods of studying in the Hijaz, where it was the custom for nearly everyone to have a personal seal. It was probably through the activities of this group that the custom of stamping seals in books – so widespread, in parts of the Ottoman and Indo-Persian worlds – has left a faint mark on Malay manuscript culture.

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APPENDIX: MANUSCRIPT BOOKS CONTAINING MALAY SEALS

Listed below are all manuscript (and one printed) books known to contain Malay seals. The manuscripts are listed by institution and shelfmark with the relevant record number (#) from "A catalogue of Malay seals" (Gallop 2002: Appendix), where full descriptions of each seal are given.16 NB the same seal may be found more than once in the same book, or in more than one book.

Indonesia
Jakarta, Perpustakaan Nasional Republik Indonesia (PNRI)
ML.335, pp.143, 185; Text on obat orang punger, #1598
ML.370, p.22; Volume of religious fragments, #1638
ML.375, p.20; Umm al-barahin, #1638 (2 impressions)
Peti 113 G 7/5a, pp. 8, 9, 11, 37, 41; Ternate court archives, #1640 (5 impressions)
Peti 113 G 7/5b; Ternate court archives, #366 (56 impressions)
Peti 113 G 7/17; Ternate court archives, #365 (39 impressions)
VT 60, p.23; Hikayat wapheset Nabi, #1637

Malaysia
Kota Bharu, Muzium Negeri Kelantan
MZH(KN)/P/1-2; Hikayat Bayan Budiman, #1062 (6 impressions)
MZ (KN)/P/92, p.1; Hikayat Bakhtiar, #1062 (3 impressions)

Kuala Lumpur, Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia (PNM)
MSS 1714, p.1; Hikayat Bayan Budiman, #1675
MSS 2488, f.1r & final page; Anthology of religious texts; #1619 (2 impressions)
MSS 2686; Treatise on the Naqsybandiyyah brotherhood; #1676 (2 impressions)
MSS 2716; Hikayat Interaputera, #1676 (2 impressions)
MSS 2829; Kitab hukum akal, #1676
MSS 2978, f.11v; Five works on religious observance; #1658

Penang, Collection Zakiah Hj. Fadzil Basheer
Collection of manuscript and printed books belonging to Syaikh Zakaria bin Omar Basheer, stamped with a variety of his seals; #1481, #1483, #1494, #1495, #1496, #1499

16. All seals with record numbers up to #1606 are included in Gallop 2002; those with higher record numbers have been documented since 2002, and will be included in the present author’s forthcoming catalogue of Malay seals.
Penang. Muzium Negeri Pulau Pinang
Personal diary of Syaikh Omar Basheer, 1867, #1498

The Netherlands

Amsterdam, Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen (KIT)
674/810, f.41r; Kitab surah marufiah, #1389

Deventer, Athenaeumbibliothec (ABD)
10 M 13 (1834, XV); Kitab al-wafiya fi sharh al-kafiya, [unnrecorded folio], #1633; f.1r, #1632
10 M 14 (1834, XVI), [final folio]; al-Fawa‘id al-diqa‘iyya, #1634

The Hague, Nationaal Archief (previously Algemeene Rijksarchief, ARA)
Depot Collectie 139, 2.21.035, nr.235; Taj al-Salatin, #102

Leiden, Universiteitsbibliothec (IUB)
Cod.Or.1401, Hikayat Paspa Wiraja, f.[1]r, #100; p.103, #101
Cod.Or.1999, p. 24; Mukhizar Tawarikh al-Wusta, #111
Cod.Or.2094, f.2r; Syair Pangratan Syarif Hasyim, #1444
Cod.Or.6315, f.2r; Treatise of the Nagasybandiyah, #676
Cod.Or.6604, p.2; Kitab daripada Asbak al-Kufid, #1443
Cod.Or.8155, f.c. & inside back cover; C'e Hadat, #569 (11 impressions)
Cod.Or.8545, f.112v, f.116v; Tuhfat al-nafs, #1441 (5 impressions)

UK

London, British Library (BL)
14620.g.19(2), Syair Azhar al-Tasdid (printed book), #343

London, Royal Asiatic Society (RAS)
Maxwell 80, f.[32]r; Kitab Abda'a, #1630
Maxwell 87, f.[1]v; Idris al-albab, #1630

Oxford, Bodleian Library
MS Jav.d.2, f.56r; Pawukon, #1222

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