A VOYAGE
To and From the
Island of BORNEO,
IN THE
EAST-INDIES.
WITH
A Description of the said ISLAND:
Giving an ACCOUNT of the Inhabitants, their Manners, Customs, Religion, Product, chief Ports, and Trade.
TOGETHER
With the Re-establishment of the English Trade there, An. 1714, after our Factory had been destroyed by the Benjarens some Years before.

ALSO
A Description of the Islands of Ceylon, Cape Verde, Java, Madura; of the Straights of Bally, the Cape of Good Hope, the Hottentots, the Island of St. Helena, Ascension, &c.

With some REMARKS and DIRECTIONS touching TRADE, &c.
The whole very pleasant and very useful to such as shall have occasion to go into those PARTS.

Illustrated with several curious Maps and Cuts.

By Captain Daniel Beeckman.

Lampblack seals from Southeast Asia

All over the Malay archipelago, from Sumatra in the east to Mindanao in the west, the standard medium for Islamic seals was not black ink but lampblack. As the method of sealing with lampblack was quite unusual to foreign observers, a few valuable eye-witness accounts of how these seals were used have been recorded. The earliest is given by J.G.F. Crawford, captain of the survey ship Investigator, who was present at the sealing of the pivotal treaty of February 1819 between Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles and Temenggung Abdul Rahman and Sultan Husain Syah of Johor, which led to the founding of a British settlement at Singapore. Crawford described the scene:

"Their mode of sealing is peculiar. The seal, about three inches in diameter, is made of silver, on which is deeply and admirably well engraved the name and rank of the proprietor; that is held over a candle which heats and blackens it with smoke. It is then pressed on the paper, over a soft cushion. It leaves a beautiful, clear impression of the characters, but which, I should suppose, would not last long without the greatest care being taken to prevent any friction over the soot."

Most Malay seals were probably stamped with lampblack from wax candles, but other sources of soot such as oil lamps may also have been used. In a Dutch account on Aceh, the seal on a nineteenth-century Acehnese royal decree is said to have probably been impressed in soot from burning resin (damanwala), which was very suitable for this purpose, better than the soot from burning kerosene (petrolaunsmuk) which was used later on."

As noted by Captain Crawford, lampblack can produce dramatic seal impressions, crisp and full of contrast. And yet since lampblack is an inherently unstable medium, certain measures were taken to help fix the resulting impression. According to a report from Brunel, the metal seal matrix was oiled prior to use, while an account from Aceh reports that the paper was dampened before the seal was impressed so as to hold the lampblack better; both these steps would have had a considerable effect on stabilising the lampblack impression. Quite a few Malay documents do bear evidence of discoloration underneath the seal, indicating that the paper was moistened before the seal was stamped. Where the moistened patch is now very dark, the water may have contained a resin or other substance which would have acted as a mild adhesive. Another possibility suggested by Edward Lane's description of the Egyptian use of saliva to moisten the paper before sealing is that any deep discoloration may be due to betelnut juices in saliva.

Left Seal of Sultan Mohammad Asimuddin of Mindanao:
set-tawaddh "Allah huwa amir al-munir" Mohammad Asimuddin, "And trusting to God, he is the prince of princes, Mohammad Asimuddin" (c.1699). 54 mm, stamped in lampblack on a letter to King George III, S Rabbidahhir 1189/3 June 1775. BL. TDP. R1/316, p.77
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With the onset of the modern era, the use of lampblack seals gradually declined all over Southeast Asia, to be replaced by ink. That lampblack was messy and seemingly unsophisticated is undeniable, but it begat the profound question of why the tradition had continued unabated throughout the Malay archipelago for over three centuries, in the face of so many practical disadvantages, and the use of ink seals by all the prestigious Muslim powers to the west. The only state outside Southeast Asia where lampblack is known to have been used for sealing is Cochin on the southwest coast of India; lampblack otherwise appears to be a uniquely Malay phenomenon. All this evidence suggests that the stamping of the royal seal in soot from a flame on a smoking brazier must have been a tradition vested with very great symbolic (and originally ritual) significance, which ensured its survival right into the dawn of the modern age.

Crawford 1917.
	Treichler 1933: 572.
	Treichler 1089: 64.
	Reeves 1922: 2,170 fn.3.
	Pers. comm. from Jenny Bullen-Parl, Nov. 2011.
The great seal of Brunei

The sultanate of Brunei, on the north-west coast of Borneo, is one of the oldest Muslim monarchies in Southeast Asia, and at the height of its power in the early sixteenth century its sway extended up to Luzon in the Philippines. By the mid-nineteenth century its influence had greatly waned, and yet Brunei's overlordship was still acknowledged all along the north coast of Borneo. A pivotal event in the subsequent fortunes of Brunei was the arrival in 1841 of a British adventurer, James Brooke, in Kuching at the mouth of the Sarawak river. Through his alliance with the Brunei prince Pengiran Muda Hashim, Brooke succeeded in being appointed by the sultan as governor and Raja of Sarawak.

Although Brooke was a private individual and not a British government official, he had many connections and sympathizers, and could depend on the armed support of the British navy against those he chose to label as 'pirates'. In 1846 Brooke joined an expedition against Brunei led by Admiral Sir Thomas Cochrane to take action against Sultan Umar Ali Saifuddin II (c.1828 - 1852) for the murder of Pengiran Muda Hashim, and to suppress piracy. In August the capital of Brunei was subdued by the British, and the sultan was forced to make numerous concessions. One of the ships in the fleet was the Iris, commanded by Captain Rodney Mundy, and on government instructions Mundy returned to Brunei at the end of the year to conclude the "Treaty of Friendship between Great Britain and Brunei", by which the island of Labuan in Brunei Bay was ceded to the British. In his published memoir, Mundy describes the sealing and signing of the Treaty on 18 December 1846:

"... his highness [the Sultan] reappeared, bearing himself the royal signet, of which he seemed extremely proud, and which was really a creditable production for native workmanship. With him came a host of followers, carrying wax tapers and hammers, and Chinese paper, when the great seal being held over the candle and blackened, the impression was stamped beneath the Malay interpretation of the treaty; my seal and signature being appended to the original English."
The great seal of Brunei

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