

AN ESSAY AT DATING AND DESCRIPTION OF A MALAY MANUSCRIPT

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[This paper sets out to establish the feasibility of dating Malay manuscripts by careful investigation, and at the same time attempts to provide a model of a manuscript description. Amongst the physical characteristics of the codex examined are the binding, the paper and the watermarks; the circumstantial evidence includes the dates between which it could have been acquired by the scholar in whose collection it is to be found, and touches on the early history of Penang; internal evidence includes a date given by the copyist. In conclusion the paper mentions the desirability that scholars who are obliged to work from microfilm copies of manuscripts should also be provided with a proper description of the manuscript itself to aid them in their research.

Kertas ini cuba menyatakan feasibiliti untuk menetapkan tarikh manuskrip-manuskrip Melayu dengan penyelidikan yang teliti, dan di samping itu cuba membentuk satu model mendeskripsi manuskrip. Di antara sifat-sifat fizikal "codex" yang diperhatikan ialah penjilidan, kertas dan tanda-sah (watermarks); bukti-bukti yang ternyata termasuk tarikh-tarikh di antara bila bahan itu telah diperolehi oleh cendekiawan tersebut, bahan itu terdapat dalam koleksinya dan menyentuh tentang sejarah awal Pulau Pinang; bukti-bukti dalaman termasuk satu tarikh yang diberi oleh penyalin. Akhir kata, kertas ini juga menyentuh berkenaan keperluan bagi cendekiawan yang hanya dapat menyelidik dengan menggunakan salinan mikrofilem supaya dibekalkan juga dengan satu diskripsi yang teratur mengenai manuskrip tersebut untuk membantu mereka dalam penyelidikan.]

Those of us who work with Malay manuscripts have been conscious for a long time of the need to ascribe a date of copying to each, but we have been rather slow to evolve a methodology for a systematic, let alone scientific study to help us date them. One is sometimes asked, usually skeptically, "Can we use the watermarks in the paper to date them?". Whatever the answer, the point surely is that the question is not really apposite: to date manuscripts we look at the internal evidence, what the scribe has written in his text or in addition to it, and we should also look at the external features, such as the style of writing, the ink, the layout of the page, the circumstances in which the manuscript was acquired, and above all at the paper; from such an 'integral' approach we may be able to estimate an approximate date for the manufacture, or use, of the paper identified, perhaps an approximate date for the binding of the codex, and within these dates perhaps a narrow band of dates within which the manuscript must have been copied. When we take this approach, the watermark becomes just another feature, as indeed does the date, if any, given by the copyist - this is naturally very significant, but should not be regarded as acceptable unless it

is supported by circumstantial evidence. Recently an opportunity arose to examine a Malay manuscript fairly systematically; it bears a copyist's date, but in the following account it was thought better to leave that till last, to see how far it tallied with the estimated date which the 'external features' would lead us to ascribe to it if it had not been dated.

On 2 September 1980 a visit to the India Office Library, London, was arranged for the participants in a Workshop on Malay Manuscripts being held at University College. In preparation for the visit the Senior Conservation Officer, Mr F.J. Marsh, had arranged for some Malay manuscripts to be examined scientifically, and the paper analysed by Miss Rowntree. One of these was Malay D.2. This is registered as the *Hikayat Raja Dewa Maharupa*. At the Workshop there had been discussion of the practical measures needed to make adequate descriptions of the physical features of Malay manuscripts. The present writers decided to choose this manuscript for study in order to make a sample description which would incorporate laboratory examination and which would include:

1. A note of the obvious physical features of the codex (dimensions, etc.)
2. An analysis of the fibres of the types of paper used.
3. Facsimiles of (a) a sample page of the text, to show layout, style of writing and general appearance and (b) of the page carrying the date.
4. Betaradiographic facsimiles to illustrate the mould-marks (including the watermarks) and at the same time to convey the "look-through" characteristics of the paper.

The description was not to involve a rereading and reassessment of the contents of the manuscript, a summary of which can be found in Van der Tuuk (1849, p. 393).

External features

The description begins with the basic data which are given in the order adopted in the *Manuscript description* form which had been devised for the Workshop:

- c) *Dimensions of leaf* 30,0 × 19,8 cm.
- f) *Number of pages* 93 p of text, which extends from fol. 1v to 47r; (recto in Malay manuscripts corresponds to verso in western ones.) Two folios appear before the text, and four after it, with some jottings. These all belong to the main run of paper.
- g) *Lines per page* 23.
- h) *From top to bottom line* 22,5 cm.
- i) *Length of a line* 14,5 cm.
- k) *Five chainline intervals* 12,0 cm

- m) **Paper** Is approximately 0,009 to 0,012 cm thick; fairly stiff; white; laid; burnished.
- n) **Ink** black throughout.
- o) **Writing** Smallish, regular.
- p) **Rulings** None visible on written pages, but first blank page after the text (i.e. 47v) has clear impressed ('dry point') horizontal and marginal lines. Each page is framed in a double black ink line.
- r) **Gatherings** Difficult to ascertain as the volume is very tightly bound, but consists of four gatherings: [A – C]¹², [D]¹³.
- t) **Binding** Full treed calf, sides plain. On spine: six 2-line gold bands with outer gold-toothed ovals. Gold centre tool, lettered in gold: 'Rajah India Mahrupa'. End bands hand sewn.

Paper of the fly-leaves

In fact as well as the main run of paper described above and discussed further below, which occupies folios 1 to 50, the codex has examples of two other types of paper. The second folio, the next before that on which the text begins, is of Oriental made paper. It is laid, as chain and laid lines are visible, though rather indistinct and irregular, consistent with the use of a local split-bamboo surfaced mould. The paper is brownish in colour, of rough texture, and displaying visible blemishes in its surface. Its thickness is variable, in the range roughly 0,010 to 0,012 cm. Analysis of the fibre furnish of this page shows it to consist mostly of bamboo, with possibly some flax present, and a great many impurities probably due to bark and other material thrown into the paper stock to fill it out; as paper, it must be regarded as of poor quality.

The final type of paper is that of the front and back fly-leaves, inserted when the volume was bound. These, and the back paste-down, have two watermarks: (i) the V E I C heart (denoting the East India Company) with the date "1808", and "S WISE & PATCH" (16,2 cm long); five chainline spaces measure 13,1 cm. The date of binding of a codex can be of indirect value in dating the copying of it as it establishes a *terminus ante quem*, assuming of course that the work was copied before it was bound. If we assume that the binding paper was not kept for years before use, we have an indication here that the codex was bound not long after 1808, the date given in the watermark. Since this task of description is in a way an exercise, it may be interesting to see what date we might have ascribed to these binding pages if the date '1808' had not been carried in them. This "S Wise & Patch" paper occurs in Heawood (no. 116) together with the year "1809". But more helpful is the knowledge that it occurs in at least nine other Malay manuscripts (viz. MSS Ml 318A and Ml 543 in the Museum Nasional, Jakarta, and in seven Malay manuscripts in British collections, see Ricklefs and Voorhoeve, p. 236), and all examples seem to fall within the year

1805-1810. This at least illustrates the value, when things are favourable, of even undated watermarks in dating the use of paper.

القصه دجتران اوله ^{هنگام} اورغي في امفون چننا اين ادسوي راج بكنوي ناز فتم برنام
مهراج درم ديلا ترلال بسر جان بكنوايه مكا اصل بكنوايه درفرد ديلا مكا بكنوايه بكنوي
اكن الفت راج چنن بكنوي نام فون فتوي چنن رديلا ترلال بكنوايه مكا فاسنا جك بوفا القسان بكنوي
سري كادخ دمكيند فارسو فتوي ايه تيا دبريندخ فدر زمان ايه مكا بكنوايه فون ترلالو مكا
سايف اكن فون فتوي ايه حتي برفالمان بكنوايه ديا تسو كجر جان مرقه دغوي عا دلوان
معهن فاك كل راج دان منوي هلبا لخي دان رعيت هيون دين الكليان اد فون بكنوايه مكا
كالا بروكمان دغوي كل راج منوي هلبا لخي مكا دفر سواة هاري بكنوايه مكا بروي رو
دغوي كل راج منوي هلبا لخي كيدا بستارا رعيت الكليان مكا ترلالو بايق فراولده
فون برون درفرد رومادان كيچي مافي فعدراي منيكم فربورون ايه مكا منس
سيكو كيچي فيوق برقد فون ترلالو نذر و خان مكا بكنوايه فون معوسر كيچي ايه
دغوي كل راج منوي هلبا لخي مكا براف داوسر تيا دجوما بران دغوي كيچي ايه مكا بكنوايه
فون عماچو كودان ترلال فغنس تيا دسمنه داوكند اوله كال راج منوي هلبا لخي مكا بكنوايه
فون كست درفرد كل راج منوي هلبا لخي مكا كيچي ايه فون خيب درفرد مكا بكنوايه مكا
فون ترايشنل اكن ديرين كست ايه مكا بكنوايه فون حيران ترچيخ هندا مكا تيا
بركروان جاني مكا بكنوايه فون دراف درافس كودان برهندي ترلالو دباوه فون كروان
برهنف سرع دغوي فرچننا مكا كل راج منوي هلبا لخي الكليان فون هابسله كست تيا
بركروان مكا كسيمه كل ديلا امليت بكنوايه برچننا ايه مكا ديلا قتي فون فدراف دركياغي
ترديري دهراف بكنوايه مكا بكنوايه فون حيران ترچيخ تيا دجوما بكنوايه مكا ديلا
ستلا ايعه اكن ديرين مكا بكنوايه فون بوكاه كيواكه فون نمب اين مكا ديلا مهلفتي فون
ترسيم سري برينده هلبا لخي ديلا مهلفتي كاهن هب ملبت فون نمب برچننا مكا بكنوايه
هلبا ماري مندا فون فون نمب دم دغوي بكنوايه نام ديلا مهلفتي مكا بكنوايه فون كوا ميه
كايه ديلا مهلفتي مكا ديلا مهلفتي فون مملف منيكم بكنوايه سري برينده جاعنه افكو
برچننا اف كهنده افكو بولر اهرند فون مكا بكنوايه سري كاند ران جك ادلفد افون

Plate A: Manuscript Malay D.2: the first page of the text

مغز نانگني راج ايتو دان راج احماعيل فري گنذر اراجا کي دنکوي مهر اراج رتسکفتي دان سڄ سرنگا
 گنذر اراجا کي دنکوي مهر اراج برکيو مکر سيمبر راج مستيرين سمنف فکون مان تينه فادک سغون
 ايتو فاکل جغتو مکر تينه بکند جا غنل گنذر دان اذن کليلو فاکي اذن مکر کل راج
 ايتو فون مان غسل لالو بر فلت بر چيم دغون مهر اراج مهاديلا لالو مچبر فون بر حان
 منوجو ماسيو فون نکرين سرغ دغون فر چنتان حتي براف لامان بر جان ايتو مکر ماسيو
 فون سمنيل کنکاري ماسيو مکر اکتو راج شاه جنادان شاه مغز نادان سڄ سرنگا دان راج احماعيل
 عيل فري فون تنقل جادي راج دوله نکرين ماسيو مکر تنقل مهر اراج مهاديلا ديانسخت
 مکر جان مرغ دغون عاد دان مکر هن فاکل ايسي نکرين دان ککل فون مسکيل فون کما يالدر
 در فدا غت بايت درم کري مهر اراج مهاديلا مکر لالو رامي نکرين ايتو سلا ما مهر اراج مهاديلا
 جادي راج ايتو مکر کل راج ايتو فون مغز افقي فد تيف تاهتا او فون فر کي ماسيو
 تيار بر فون لاکي مکر نم  حکايت مهر اراج مهاديلا مکر
 فد ۱۲۱۶ هـ تاهن جيم فد امت بلس هاري بولن ذ القعين دسود هکي فد واليکوهاري
 بولن ذ القعين فون زمان کي رند در کفيت دکر و جادي راج دبدر فون فون

Plate B: The last page of the text, bearing the date

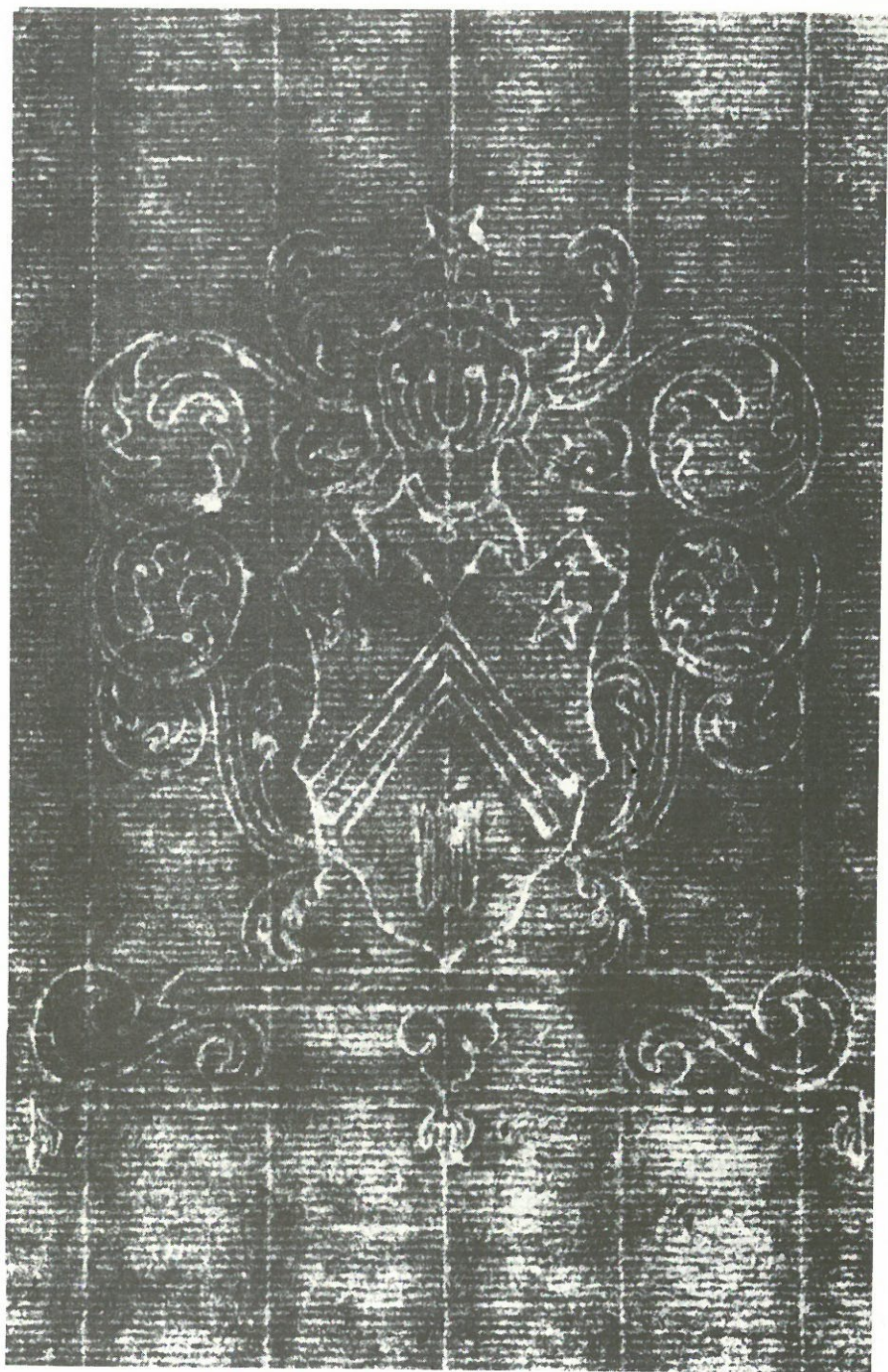


Plate C: Reproduction (by Betaradiography) of watermark in the paper

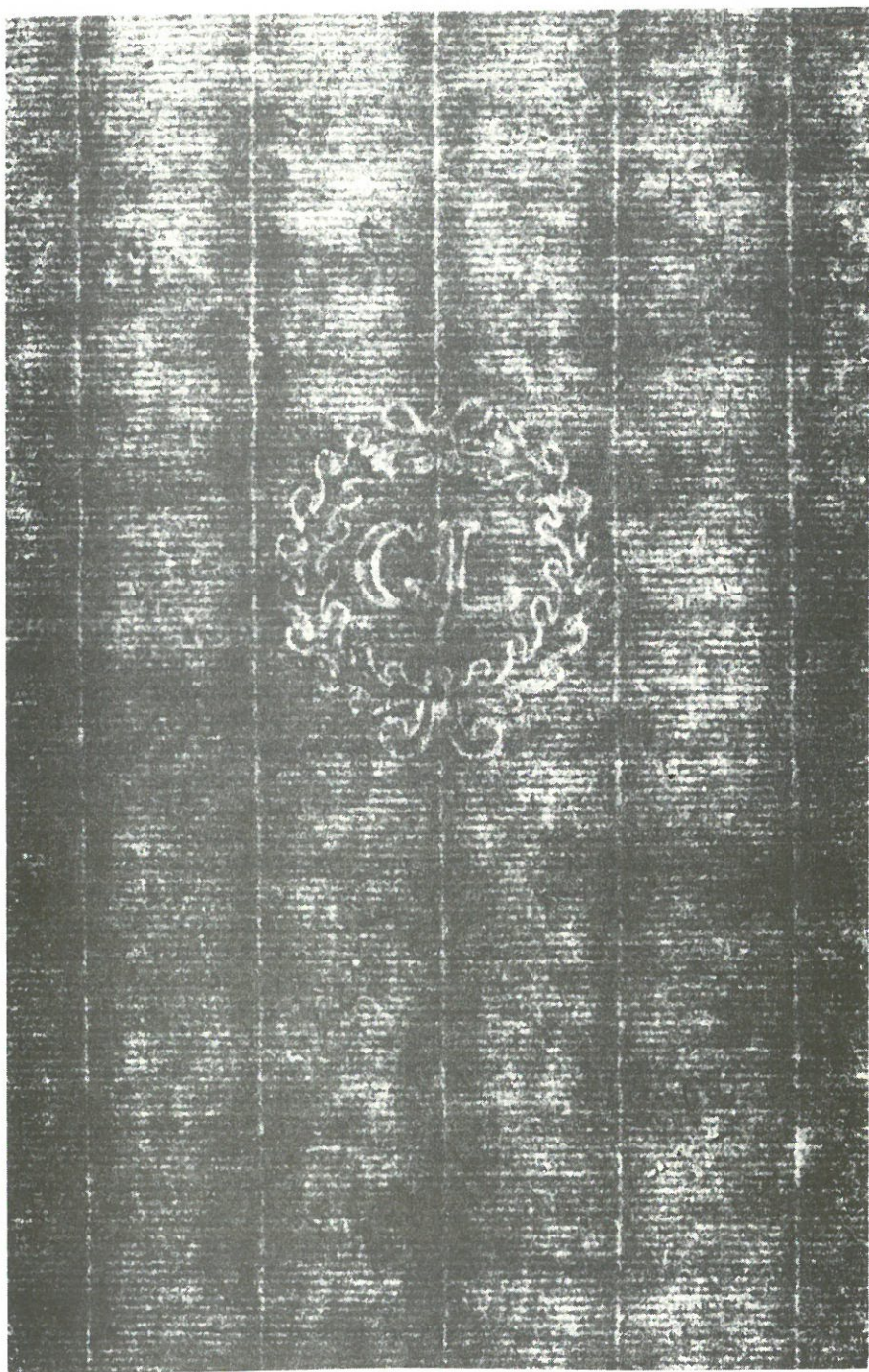


Plate D: Reproduction of the countermark

Characteristics of the main run of paper

This run, comprising all the leaves on which the text is written, and three blank folios, consists of laid paper of European manufacture. Apart from the data given above, the results of fibre analysis of this paper can be given: it is composed of beaten cotton linters, is of good quality, and contains no impurities.

The chain lines lie vertically on the page, and it can be assumed that the codex is a folio, that is, each sheet of paper (bifolium) originally used becomes two leaves in the codex. This assumption is supported by the position of the watermarks, which lie centrally in the half-sheet. The main watermark and countermark do not occur regularly on alternate pages, but their occurrence does conform to the pattern of gatherings described above, (e.g. the main mark is found in folio 12, so the countermark is found in the conjoint folio 1). The main mark is reproduced in Plate 'C' and the countermark in Plate 'D'. A further small feature must be mentioned, that is a small watermark which occurs in the corner of the folios bearing the main mark; it is not seen in illustration 'C' - it would be near the bottom left hand corner, and about 7,0 cm away from the main mark, thus beyond the edge of the facsimile. It resembles a thick letter 'I', about 1,2 cm high. It has not been identified, and will not be discussed further. The two main marks ('C' & 'D') can be found together in Heawood's catalogue (no. 3736, described as "scrollwork"); his example, to be found at the Royal Geographical Society London, occurs in a work *Collecao de Noticias* emanating from Lisbon ca. 1825. An examination of what was assumed to be his source at the Library of the Royal Geographical society failed to reveal this watermark. Some slight confirmation of an Iberian provenance for this paper is found in the queried note by Heawood (p. 147) of the occurrence also of the word "Leveratti" in his sample, and his noting the occurrence of both the initials "G L" and the word "Leveratto" in a paper emanating from Spain in 1796. Nicolai (1935, Tome ii, Pl. xxii) records another example of the mark in S.W. France, but it is undated and its origins are unknown, so it is of little help to us.

An example of this watermark has been found in one other manuscript; it occurs in a manuscript (no. M58) in a subsidiary collection of Arabic and Malay fragments which were being prepared for rebinding in the Musium Pusat, Jakarta, collection, on 27 July 1971; the fragment concerned was not dated. It is highly likely that further occurrences will be found eventually.

Provenance of the manuscript

As Ricklefs and Voorhoeve note, this manuscript belonged to the

Leyden collection (no. 227). John Leyden died in Batavia in August 1811, and was buried there; in 1824 his library of Oriental works was sold for the sum of £500 to the India Office Library in London. An inventory of them made in 1828 (MS Eur. D 562/19) contains this entry "227 Rajah India Mahrupa Malay MS 4 to [sic] bound". More than twenty of the Malay manuscripts now in the India Office Library formerly belonged to Leyden (see Ricklefs and Voorhoeve, pp. 122-6). The dates of these seem to range fairly evenly over the years 1801-11. Here we may introduce the fact (see below) that the colophon of our manuscript mentions the Governor of Penang. Leyden was in Penang for two short periods only, between October 1805 and January 1806, when he was convalescing from his post in India, and secondly in 1811, when he was on his way to participate in the occupation of Java. As he himself records, his first visit to Penang took place "in the course of a voyage, which the state of my health caused me to take to the eastern isles, in 1805, during which I resided some time at *Penang*, and visited *Achi*, with some other places on the coasts of *Sumatra* and the *Malayan Peninsula*" (Leyden, 1808, 159). The mention of Penang in the colophon of the manuscript we are considering makes it unlikely that he collected it elsewhere. Taken together, these facts also make it unlikely that he himself steadily collected Malay manuscripts over a period of time, or for the matter that he had the manuscripts copied to order. It is more likely that he was able to acquire in one go a small collection of manuscripts assembled by someone else, possibly adding himself one or two manuscripts collected elsewhere. It is likely enough that Leyden's Malay manuscripts were bound just before or just after his death; the date in the fly-leaves ("1808") would be consistent with use round 1811. As to where this manuscript was bound, we have to resort to surmise: Paper manufactured evidently in England and specifically for the use of the East India Company (as the watermark indicates) would obviously be available in India, which must be regarded as the most likely place for the binding, but it could easily have been available also in Penang, for example, and even perhaps in Britain, amongst E.I.C. circles.

There is no doubt that the history of individual manuscripts in collections such as that of Leyden will become clearer when a comparative study has been made of the external features of all of them. A recent as yet unpublished study by Dr. C.A. Grinter and Dr. S.W.R. Mulyadi of the Malay manuscripts collected in Bangkahulu by C. Evans shows how valuable such an overall survey can be.

To review what evidence for dating we have found so far: As a *terminus a quo* we have 1786, when a British settlement was made at Penang, and as a *terminus ante quem* we have 1811, the year that Leyden died; these dates are in themselves indisputable, and the possibility of this manuscript not being collected by Leyden and the possibility of a scribe referring to a Governor of Penang before the founding of the settlement there are equally remote. The watermarks in the main run of paper give only tenuous cor-

roboration for these dates, owing to the absence of recorded occurrences of them in other datable Malay manuscripts; but Heawood's examples do tentatively suggest the years 1796 and 1825 (which latter date can be ruled out as we already have a *terminus ante quem* of 1811). We can narrow the probable dates for the copying of the manuscript by noting that the dated Malay manuscripts in Leyden's collection range between 1801 and 1811, affording some indication that he did not collect any really old examples. On the other hand we have the interesting fact that the scribe had provided some protection for the text by beginning his writing on the verso of the first leaf, leaving the outside blank; in addition a sheet of coarse (probably cheap) paper of local manufacture was placed before the front page, the outside of this being soiled from use; if a similar sheet of coarse paper was used to protect the back of the work, it must have become detached fairly soon, as the outside surface of the last page of the main run of paper is also well soiled from use. This evidence of use suggests that it was in local use for some time after it was copied, and makes it therefore very unlikely that this was a copy 'made to order' for Leyden. We might therefore surmise that the manuscript would have been copied a few years before either 1805, or before 1811, the years when Leyden was in Penang.

Colophon (see Plate 'B')

Having reviewed some of the external evidence, we may now form a shrewd idea as to what date would be acceptable for this manuscript. The scribe ends his text (fol. 47v) with:

Malay transcription

- 11Maka tamatlah sudah Hikayat Maharaja Mahadewa dimula
- 12 pada sanat 1216 tahun, tahun jim, pada empat belas hari bulan
- 13 Zulkaedah, disudahkan pada dua likur hari
- 13 bulan Zulkaedah, pada zaman Gurnadur Lafdian Kiunar jadi raja di Bandar Pulau Pinang.

Translation

- 11The Hikayat Maharaja Mahadewa was begun
- 12 in the year 1216, a *jim* year, on the 14th of the month Zulkaedah, and was completed on the 21st of the
- 13 month Zulkaedah, at the time that Governor was ruler in the harbour town of Penang Island.

Remarks

The date 21 Zulkaedah 1216 AH corresponds to Thursday 25 March

1802, and is in every way consistent with the indirect evidence for dating which we have reviewed; it may therefore be accepted with reasonable confidence as the actual date of the copying of this manuscript.

There remain a few puzzles in the colophon, but these do not call in question the validity of our findings. The year-letter *jim* does not tally with the year 1216 in any work we have consulted (it does correspond to 1213 and 1218 AH); the employment of these year-letters remains to be studied, as so far no writer has offered a table of correspondences which can account for the seemingly random use of them. This is not a serious problem therefore here.

The name of the governor presents problems. The first Lieutenant-Governor of Penang, Sir George Leith, took office in 1800, and in January 1804 he was succeeded by Robert Townsend Farquhar; Farquhar in turn was replaced in September 1805 by Philip Dundas, who was appointed full Governor. The Malay word for 'governor' used at that time was usually 'gurnador' or 'kurnadur' (from Portuguese, *governador*), which occurs in the last line of the text here. Immediately following it we should of course expect to find the *name* of the current governor. The two words transcribed as "Lafdian Kiunar" were unfamiliar to the copyist (he adds vocalisation aids to them), and were probably regarded as personal names. It is possible that they signify a senior official in Penang at that time, or that they are an attempt at writing "Lieutenant Farquhar", in which case the date given would be some two years too early. Alternatively they may be meant to signify "Lieutenant-Governor", a title then relatively new in the Settlement, and probably construed to be the personal name of the incumbent, Sir George Leith. It should be added that the transcription "Lafdian Kiunar" is only one of several possibilities for these enigmatic words.

It is somewhat surprising to find this sample of what appears to be Spanish paper being used by a scribe in Penang just after 1800; we could expect the paper used to be English or Dutch. But we do find examples of the Picador mark (a mounted spearsman and a bull) from Aceh and elsewhere in the last decades of the eighteenth century, so there may have been some regular source of supply. It is known that the Picador mark was placed in paper made in Italy for the Spanish market in the eighteenth century (Heawood, 37), and it is possible that our paper too was made in Italy rather than the Iberian Peninsula. There is evidence for the fact that a separate supply route existed for the export of paper from Italy to the East.

There is a great chasm in our knowledge of locally made papers used in Malay manuscripts (whether 'Chinese', 'Javanese' or 'Oriental'), and we can deduce nothing about the age or provenance of the sheet of locally made paper surviving in this manuscript. However, it is possible that by analysing the constituent fibres of this one we are making a start on the

research which is badly needed in this sphere.

There therefore remains much to be studied in this field, but perhaps this little exercise has at least shown that careful examination will sometimes take us a long way towards the estimation of a date for a manuscript; where a manuscript bears no date, this is self-evidently useful, but even where a date is given by the copyist, some investigation on these lines is still necessary before we accept any date given.

In the present case the note by the scribe that it took him seven days to copy the text is a welcome extra crumb of information.

It would scarcely be realistic to hope that manuscript descriptions in catalogues could go into the detail offered here; apart from the time needed to produce them, the space would be prohibitive - the existing catalogue of Indonesian manuscripts in Britain, running to 237 pages, compresses what we have said into the following succinct phrases "Dated in Penang, A.H. 1216 [A.D. 1801]. 47 ff. Eur. paper, 30 × 19.5 cm. John Leyden collection (227)" (Ricklefs & Voorhoeve, 126).

However, it would not be unreasonable to strive to produce such a description, with some of the shortcomings removed, for example to accompany a microfilm copy of a manuscript when that is ordered; there is no doubt that a researcher who has to rely on a microfilm reproduction without a proper description is at a great disadvantage when it comes to assessing and dating a manuscript.

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