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A Collection of Unstandardised Consistencies? The Use of Jawi Script in a Few Early Malay Manuscripts from the Moluccas

Abstract: Jawi, a form of Arabic script in use in insular Southeast Asia, has been employed for writing Malay manuscripts for at least eight centuries (13th–20th centuries). Introduced and disseminated through Islamic canonical texts such as the Qur'an, it became the principal means of communication and knowledge production over the years and across the region. Studies of Malay palaeography and orthography have been rare and far between, and are mainly limited to colonial scholars designing the rules to be taught in the educational system and a number of surveys that record the orthography of certain texts.

Inspired by a recent publication which concisely discusses the palaeography and orthography of 60 dated or datable Malay manuscripts, the following chapter will expand on some of the observations made by the scholars. I will discuss a number of 17th–19th-century manuscripts originating from the Moluccas and compare some characteristics of their orthography with those of the *Hikayat Tanah Hitu*, a Malay historical narrative compiled in the mid-17th century. In this exploration of orthographic consistencies and peculiarities in Malay manuscripts originating from one region, I argue that the ambiguity of Jawi was a welcome characteristic that could accommodate the needs of multilingual communities found in the Malay world.

1 Introduction

Throughout history, the writing of Malay has made use of a variety of scripts in concordance with the prevailing influence of a major belief system or hegemonic colonial regime: Hindu-Buddhist traditions made use of a southern Brahmi script that spawned a number of vernacular forms; Islam brought Semitic languages and the Arabic script; and European imperialism and 'modernity' brought Latin script, which would eventually dominate the written and printed communications in insular Southeast Asia from the 19th century onwards, even though Christianity never became the dominating religion of the region. Insular Southeast Asia, where the Malay language was developed, spread and is now widely used,

is predominantly Islamic except for the northern part of the Philippines and some areas in eastern Indonesia. It is generally assumed that Islam gained its first firm footing in the 13th century with the conversion of the ruler of Samudra-Pasai at the northern tip of Sumatra. Other polities in the islands soon followed, and a Muslim trading network in the region gradually developed, renewing ties and connecting with larger networks across the Indian Ocean.

Islam not only introduced its canonical texts with their Arabic language and script, it also informed and enhanced contacts with other Muslim traditions such as Gujarati and Persian. These newly introduced traditions met with existing ways of disseminating texts and knowledge, with which they mixed in different ways according to local circumstances in very complex and multifarious processes that took place over a long period of time. In the multi-linguistic environment of the Indonesian archipelago, Malay was one of the vernaculars that had been used for a long time to communicate official matters of state and religious affairs and was apparently sufficiently known in 13th-century North Sumatra to become the vehicle of transmission for the new religion. Although there are a few examples of Islamic texts represented in locally derived Brahmi scripts, the Arabic script seems to have soon taken over the dominant role in disseminating religious knowledge and also other, more secular topics such as business affairs.

Expanding Muslim trading networks greatly stimulated the dissemination of Islam, its texts and the languages of transmission, Arabic, Persian and, most extensively, Malay. Due to geopolitical circumstances and reasons, the nodes of this network dispersed over a myriad of islands, all with their own local interests and traditions. Later, other Asian and European trading partners joined, and eventually disturbed the balance within the network. Therefore, it is difficult if not impossible to discern a single and strong Arabic or Malay Islamic tradition that would encompass the whole region and spur further developments. Throughout history, there have been powerful centres that have extended great influence over a longer period of time in political and cultural terms, such as Melaka in the 15th century, Aceh and Banten in the 16th until the mid-17th centuries, and Makassar in the 17th century. However, the impact these power centres impressed upon a more generally defined Malay culture was relatively short-lived and therefore limited in scope. Of course, the presence and gradual expansion of the influence of the Dutch East Indies Trading Company (Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie or VOC) also thwarted the establishment and continuation of a firm Malay Islamic tradition.

Although we perhaps cannot speak of a strong, single Malay tradition, the Arabic script which seems to have become current in insular Southeast Asia in the 16th and 17th centuries made it possible for narratives to be circulated within a cultural realm heterogeneously and temporally delineated by a combination of trade agreements, religion and language. The Arabic script, developed to represent the

Semitic language in close connection with the writing down and distribution of the holy Qur'an and other liturgical and theological texts, was adjusted to enable the translation of these texts into languages of other language families. Probably based on a familiarity with similar adjustments made for Persian and Indian languages, five consonants were added for writing Malay (<p>: ڤ , <c>: چ, <ng>: ڠ, <ny>: ڽ and <g>: ݢ), while in the Javanese system an extra two characters were added to represent the retroflex stops /ʈ/ and /ɖ/. These modifications were realised by adding diacritical dots to the existing forms of the Arabic characters, e.g. the Malay voiceless palatal stop /ʧ/ is represented by the addition of three dots below the Arabic ح <ḥ>. The set of Arabic characters to write Javanese is called Pégon. It is used next to locally developed Brahmi-derived as well as Latin scripts, while Jawi is the common name to refer to the alphabet used to write texts in Malay and several other regional languages. Palaeographical and orthographical studies of Jawi as used in manuscripts are rare, and were mostly carried out by colonial officials and missionaries who made it their business to disparage Jawi spelling. They argued that it was defective in terms of not representing the full range of vowels and, probably more importantly for most of them, that it was connected to Islam. Inspired by such considerations, they made efforts to 'force Jawi spelling into a Procrustean bed of presumed rules and standards' (Kratz 2002, 22).

On the other hand, Ulrich Kratz (2002) also contends that it may in fact be this 'defective' nature of the Jawi spelling not fully indicating the vowels of a word which allows for a variation in pronunciation and writing, a characteristic well appreciated in a multilingual environment and conducive to joining people together in a common cultural realm. In a recent publication, issued as a tribute to Ulrich Kratz's scholarship on Malay manuscript studies, Annabel Teh Gallop refers to this particularity in Malay spelling as a 'tradition of inconsistency' which may provide a good way of describing the impressions one gets upon reading Malay manuscripts (Gallop 2015, 29).

In this chapter I would like to follow up on some of the points Kratz and Gallop have indicated in their recent publications and explore a few characteristics of the Jawi spelling as found in a small number of manuscripts originating from the Moluccas in the 17th century. I must emphasise here that this is a first preliminary exploration of this kind, building on what has been displayed in *A Jawi Sourcebook for the Study of Malay Palaeography and Orthography* (Gallop 2015), which contains a concise survey of the writing in 60 dated Malay manuscripts spanning almost 350 years. In the next section, I will concisely discuss some earlier studies about Jawi spelling before going on to introduce and contextualise the manuscripts I explore in the remainder of this paper. As will become clear, the state of the art does not allow me to make any sweeping conclusions about standardisation of the Jawi script or the development of the orthography in Malay manuscripts.

2 Studies in Malay orthography

With reference to the recent studies by the above-mentioned scholars of Jawi script, earlier studies about Jawi orthography in general have put much effort into determining how ill-equipped the modified Arabic script was for the representation of Malay sounds. Moreover, they sought to prescribe certain rules that would improve the deplorable state of affairs and make the Malays write their language in a proper manner (see Kratz 2002 and Gallop 2015). In an elaborate survey of the history of the scripts used for writing Malay, Hashim Musa (1997) understandably focuses on a description of the Jawi script which to a certain extent is still being used and propagated in certain Malaysian quarters. His book presents long lists of spelling particularities that were gleaned from a wide array of Malay texts, ranging from a number of early inscriptions on tombstones and the earliest evidence of Jawi script in the region on the Trengganu Stone (dated 1303 CE) to a selection of manuscripts from the 16th up to the 19th century, to the spelling of a few books, treatises and news items in periodicals published in Malaysia in the 20th century. In a concise discussion of earlier studies on this topic, the author simply reverberates a well-known proposition made by the British missionary-cum-scholar William Girdlestone Shellabear (1901) that the relatively fixed standard of the writing in early Malay manuscripts was due to the recent transfer of the script from Arab teachers to Malay pupils. This standard for the writing of Malay is supposed to have gradually faded in subsequent periods as more local particularities seeped into the writing system. These local particularities mainly pertain to the representation of a few consonants, such as the opposition between *f* and *p, g* and glottal stop, and especially the writing of vowels in the words. Hashim Musa also refers to a study by the Korean Kang Kyoung Seok, who proposed the thesis that the Jawi spelling had gone through three stages in its development for the purpose of representing the Malay language. The first phase is characterised by a faithful rendering of Malay sounds by applying an Arabic standard with a full set of diacritics, including vowel points. In the second phase, this standard was gradually left behind and vowel points were replaced by a set of semi-vowels comprising *alif*, *wāw* and *yā'* . These represent the vowel pairs a/ə, o/u and i/e (è, é), which were inserted in the penultimate syllable of normal two- or three-syllable words in Malay which contains the word stress.[1] The third phase was characterised by the inclusion of these semi-vowels also in the ultimate syllable, a feature which is visible in the standard Jawi spelling systems developed in modern-day Malaysia (Hashim 1997, 78–80, Kratz 2002, 23).

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1 For a discussion about the *alif* used to represent /ə/, see below.

As a general rule of thumb, the most obvious characteristic of the second phase often found in Malay manuscripts produced between the 16th and 19th centuries is the spelling of common words such as *jadi* 'to be, become' as جاد <jad>, and *orang* 'human being' as اورڠ <awrng>.[2] However, this feature of not indicating vowels in certain positions and the use of a set of ambivalent indicators (i.e. the use of semi-vowels), or even the total absence of any indication of vowels, which regularly occurs in the spelling of certain words,[3] charges the written texts with a certain degree of ambiguity which has led to severe criticism of past and present scholars and other observers imbued by a print-literate-inspired longing for unambiguousness of written texts (cf. Milroy and Milroy 1991, 64–69). Such criticism, of course, tacitly ignores similar inconsistencies in spelling and other linguistic peculiarities which were common in European written texts from an earlier period when mass education was not yet established and the standardisation of language usages was much less developed than it is now. Written communication is usually considered superior to speech in Western civilisations and by consequence applied as a yardstick to measure cultures in other parts of the world. However, two caveats must be brought forward with respect to 'measuring' Malay writing in accordance with such a 'universal' truism. Besides the fact that we are dealing with texts which were written down during a time when virtually no structured formal education existed in the Malay world, it may also be conceived that there are languages in which a certain degree of ambiguity in texts may be more appreciated than a formal, unambiguous form of communication. Such a consideration was proposed by Geoffrey Benjamin with regard to the informality and situatedness of colloquial Malay, which cherishes a high degree of ambiguity and invites interlocutors to join the 'language play'. This informal or condensed variety of the language shares certain important characteristics with the Malay used in narratives recited for local audiences, such as a-historicity, a lack of interest in the relations between events, and a downplaying of individuality. Benjamin describes this condensed form of Malay as a system in constant flux, where we are faced with contextual and fleeting shifts in cultural meanings projected by native speakers on the linguistic forms being used (Benjamin 1993, 355–56).

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2 Words starting with the vowels i/e or u/o are introduced with the *alif-yā'* and *alif-wāw* respectively.

3 This commonly leads to consonant frameworks which can accommodate different vocalisations. The framework سنتق (s-n-t-q), for instance, is interpreted in Klinkert's Malay-Dutch dictionary (1947, 603–4) as *santak* ('to thump'), *səntak* ('to pull'), *santuk* ('sleepy; to accidentally hit something'), *suntuk* ('being obstructed'), *sintok* ('tree species: cinnamomum *sintoc*'), *sintik* ('type of small oyster').

A similar proposition is made by Ulrich Kratz, who calls the major perceived shortcoming of not indicating all vowels of the words in what is to a certain extent a received Jawi spelling a 'major strength'. Part of his attractive contention is that Jawi had established a 'shared written link' among regions and dialects (Kratz 2002, 23). This kind of written link seems to have existed in particular between Malay and Minangkabau cultural realms in Sumatra, whose languages share a large number of lexical items but differ in their pronunciation. In the case of such similar languages it seems quite straightforward to conceive that the inherent ambiguity of linguistic expressions in the writing system of these languages was considered to be a positive feature, as it marks a more open venue for communication than a form rigidly controlled by non-negotiable rules for the spelling of particular words. The consonant framework سنج (s-n-j), for instance, allows speakers of these languages to realise a different pronunciation, [sənja] and [sanjo] for Malay and Minangkabau respectively, which in the oral/aural mode of communication may not be readily recognised by them as one and the same word. However, its visual representation in written form is identical in Arabic script and therefore the meaning is readily understandable for speakers of both languages as 'dusk'.

A second caveat we need to make in this respect concerns the disregard of a differentiation of certain textual genres and the possible existence of more stable local traditions that produced Malay texts in which a higher degree of consistency was applied than general statements allow for. As the accuracy of Malay scribes' copying of doctrinal Islamic texts is generally considered higher than in more secular texts (see e.g. Voorhoeve 1964), it seems likely that the former textual genre will show a higher degree of consistency in spelling in comparison to the latter. We should also be aware that, although Malay was the language of state and religious learning from the 16th century onwards in many parts of the archipelago and beyond, people used different local languages in daily conversation in polities such as Aceh, Makassar, Bima and the Moluccas. These distinct polities were nodes in Islamic trading and linked scholarly networks; here local traditions may have developed their own particularities in terms of textual layout, shape and spelling in manuscripts produced at the courts of the rulers and other centres of learning. The study of these kinds of regional traditions found in clusters of related and datable documents may be a more fruitful approach, leading to a certain understanding about developments in the palaeography and orthography of Jawi writing, as Annabel Teh Gallop convincingly proposes in her recent publication. As preliminary examples of such traditions she mentions a few characteristics of an Acehnese religious book hand which was current in religious writings in the 18th and 19th century, and a Moluccan chancery hand found in documents from the royal courts in the Moluccas (Gallop 2015, 34–36). It is this notion of a

local tradition in the production of manuscripts I will engage in here and explore to what extent it can be applied to a number of manuscripts that originate from the Moluccas and the royal court of Makassar on the island of Sulawesi.

3 Malay documents from the Moluccas and Makassar

Although it was already widely used as a trading language in eastern parts of the archipelago at an early stage, Malay was not the only or the most dominating language of the region. In the 17ᵗʰ century, Malay had to compete with Portuguese, Spanish and Arabic as language of diplomacy; it was used in combination with Arabic in the dissemination of religious knowledge; and it also served as contact language next to a welter of local languages in daily conversations and trade negotiations. Because of the invaluable spices grown in the Moluccan islands, for centuries the region had been a trading hub which attracted a host of merchants, priests and soldiers from the archipelago, such as Javanese, Makassarese and Butonese, and from other parts of the world, including Arabs, Chinese, Indians and Europeans. Quite a few minor local rulers tried to establish their own polity to surf the prosperous wave of increasingly globalised trading networks, which inevitably led to harsh competition and full-scale wars between local contenders who frequently called in the assistance of outside forces to decide the conflicts with their neighbours and other contenders. In the 16ᵗʰ century the islands were alternately dominated by the northern polities of Ternate and Tidore. The former first secured Portuguese support for their political agenda, and later the Dutch helped the rulers to consolidate their power and prosperity into the 17ᵗʰ century, ironically also making Islam the dominant religion in the islands, despite Portuguese and Dutch proselytising activities. Not long after its arrival, the Dutch VOC implemented a gruesome monopoly on the cultivation and trade of cloves and nutmeg by forcefully expelling all foreign competitors and playing regional powers off against each other, or killing them if they failed to comply with the new rules.

It is in this highly volatile context that the documents I will discuss are set. The first and most important document is the *Tale of Hitu* (*Hikayat Tanah Hitu*). Hitu was a polity which had united 30 settlements on the north coast of Ambon, and it was jointly ruled by four prominent families. Imam Sifar Rijali, a learned member of one of these four ruling families, is reported to have written *Hikayat Tanah Hitu* while he was staying at the viceroy's court of Gowa in Makassar. Because of severe reductions in the clove production imposed by the Dutch VOC, the govern-

ment of Hitu had declared a war that would rage in the central Moluccan islands with intervals during the 1640s and 1650s. Rijali had taken refuge in Makassar to ask the assistance of the Makassarese at Gowa as the main competitors of the Ternatean overlords of Hitu. The rulers of Ternate were too much inclined to go along with Dutch rule. Subsequently, in the 1650s one of the factions of the Ternatean ruling family rebelled against this pro-Dutch stance of the sultan and open fighting broke out on the islands under the leadership of Majira, a distant member of the ruling family of Ternate. As one of the Hituese leaders, Rijali intended to restore the authority of his government. It was perhaps to provide documentation of the ongoing war to support his appeal or at the personal request of the enlightened viceroy of Makassar, Karaeng Pattingalloang, that Rijali compiled a prose narrative about the events and their historical context.[4]

Hikayat Tanah Hitu more or less chronologically deals with the early state formation in Hitu (1500–38), wars the Hituese waged on the Portuguese (1538–1605), the monopolisation of the clove trade by the VOC (1605–43), and Hituese armed opposition against the abolition of the Hituese government (1643–46). After writing the tale during his exile in Makassar, Rijali went back to the Moluccan islands in 1653, where a copy of the work was made in the 1650s for another member of his family. It is this copy that was passed on into the hands of the well-known German-born merchant, botanist and historian Georg Eberhard Rumphius, who spent most of his life in Ambon. This copy then, possibly by way of the Dutch Reverend Valentijn, eventually ended up in Leiden. Both Rumphius and Valentijn, well-known contemporaneous commentators on Moluccan affairs and important contributors to its historiography, used the tale to mine information for the writing of their own histories of the region. In his monumental *Oud en Nieuw Oost Indiën* (1724–26) Valentijn mentioned the tale as one of the texts being circulated within Muslim quarters. He interpreted this as an indication of the scholarship of the Muslim part of the Moluccan population, whose knowledge and ability to speak and write Malay he considered much better developed than the level of proficiency of the Christians under his tutelage. He was convinced that this better command of Malay by Muslims was due to the fact that they possessed a number of Malay writings, which they lent to each other to read or copy. Among the other texts he found in Ambon, Valentijn listed works which are now considered as classics in Malay traditional writing, including *Sulalat al-Salatin* or *Sejarah Melayu*, containing historical tales focusing on Malacca; *Hikayat Amir*

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4 For a full account of the historical context and a description of the manuscript containing this text, see Stravers, Van Fraassen, and van der Putten 2004. The unique manuscript is preserved under Cod. Or. 5448 in Leiden University Library.

Hamzah, a tale about Prophet Muhammad's uncle; and *Hikayat Nabi Muhammad* and *Hikayat Nur Muhammad*, two tales about the Prophet Muhammad.

Hikayat Tanah Hitu is one of the very few relatively old text examples we have from eastern Indonesia, which adds to its importance for manuscript studies in general and the study of the development of the Jawi script in particular. The manuscript originally consisted of 53 folded folio pages which seem to have been bound with thread in quires. Since most of these pages are torn in the fold, the manuscript now almost exclusively comprises loose pages, measuring about 32 by 20 centimeters. The beginning of the tale is missing and the pages have been numbered using Arabic numerals from 2 up to 107 by one of the later owners or users. The first 80 pages each contain 17 lines in orderly Arabic characters, whereas the script in the remaining pages is less regular and these pages contain 15 to 17 lines. The manuscript held at Leiden University Library is still clearly legible, but the paper is rather worn and tattered at the edges. Even though the manuscript was probably originally bound, there is no sign of any covers or end-papers. The first and last pages are provisionally repaired with Japanese tissue and quite a few pages have greasy stains.

The extant text starts with the end of what must be the initial episode of the tale, which indicates that not many pages have gone missing from this manuscript. A few doodles that embellish the pages which now serve as first and last page, indicating the beginning and end of the extant manuscript, suggest that any covers and the beginning of the text might have been missing already by the time the copy was made or passed on into Dutch hands. The remaining part is complete, since the last page of the manuscript contains the end of the text.

The paper used for the copy of Rijali's text reveals some indications about the age of the manuscript, as the last 14 pages contain a watermark (a fool's cap) and a countermark (consisting of the initials for VOC). The typical fool's cap watermark indicates that the paper dates from the second half of the 17th century, whereas the countermark shows that the paper was ordered by the VOC.[5] Therefore the manuscript may be dated to the second half of the 17th century and is among the oldest Indonesian manuscripts extant. This is in contrast with most of the preserved Malay manuscripts which contain copies of texts made during the 19th century for successive generations of owners, as climatic conditions in the tropics render paper a highly perishable medium for the distribution of texts.

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5 The paper shows a fool's cap with a seven-pointed collar of a kind which is likely to have been manufactured in the second half of the 17th century, while fool's caps with five-pointed collars are generally from the first half of that century (see Laurentius and Laurentius 2008, 2: vii).
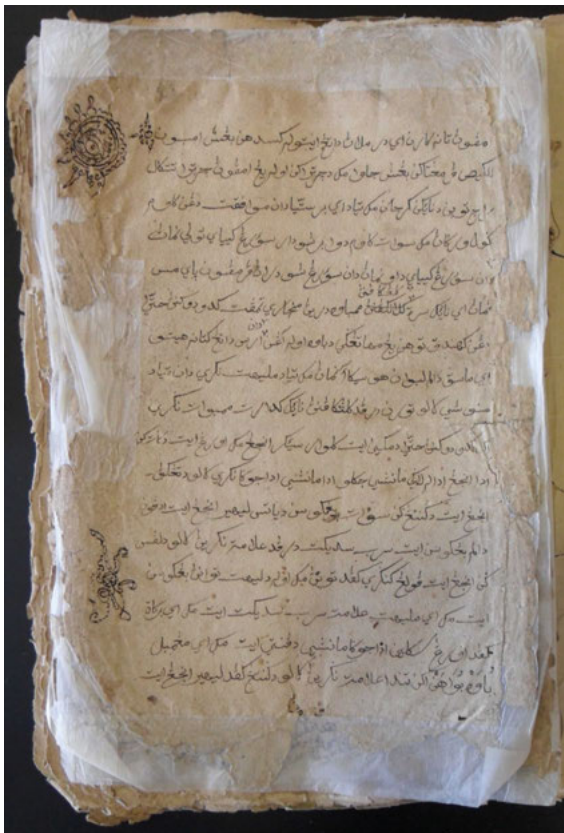
Fig. 1: First page of the *Tale of Hitu* (*Hikayat Tanah Hitu*), Leiden University Library, Cod. Or. 5448. © Courtesy of the University Library Leiden.

The *Hikayat Tanah Hitu* manuscript not only contains indications about its age, but also about its origin. In this respect a piece of calligraphy that appears twice in the manuscript deserves special attention: in the top margin of pages 77 and 78 of the manuscript (shown in Fig. 2), we find the phrase *Min Bulan Nustapi* (written as من بلن نسطفي (m-n-b-l-n n-s-ṭ-f-y) and meaning 'belonging to Bulan Nusatapi', the sobriquet of one of Rijali's cousins. This may be interpreted as the hallmark or inscription of the original owner(s) of the manuscript; Nustapi or Nusatapi was the name of Rijali's lineage. The manuscript also offers indications that it was a copy of an older one, perhaps even of the original text by Rijali. At certain intervals in the manuscript we find a word in the margin that has served as a sign for someone to indicate that the reading during a certain session had come to that

particular point in the text. Although quite common in the Islamic tradition of the Middle East, this Arabic word, *balagh* (بلغ; 'reach, transmit, report'), is not a mark that appears frequently in Malay manuscripts. In this manuscript it seems to indicate the reading by an authoritative reader who compared the copy with the original and in the end gave his approval to the copy. This approval is found on page 92, where the word *ṣaḥḥ* (صح; 'authentic, acknowledged, legal') is written in the margin. These marginal notes of *balagh* and *ṣaḥḥ* suggest that a member of the Nusatapi family carefully checked the manuscript, gave his approval to the copy and eventually inscribed the name of his family as an indication of ownership in the manuscript.

Fig. 2: Inscription of the name of the original custodians of the manuscript; pages 77 and 78 of the *Hikayat Tanah Hitu*, Leiden University Library, Cod. Or. 5448. © Courtesy of the University Library Leiden.

As indicated before, there are not many Malay documents that have been preserved from this period and region, but some scattered manuscripts may serve as extant material with which the orthography and some palaeographic characteristics of the handwritten *Tale of Hitu* can be usefully compared. These documents include a manuscript preserved in the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin which contains (1) a (fragment of an) undated letter from one of the Hituese leaders probably compiled in connection with one of the other texts in the manuscript, namely (2) an agreement between the Ternatean Sultan Mandar Syah and the Dutch Governor-General of 1652; and (3) the text of an agreement between the Dutch and Sultan Hamza in Ternate from 1638 (Staatsbibliothek, Ms. Or. Fol 409, 1–3).[6] The other documents comprise a letter from a Ternatean leader in exile in Makassar, Kime-

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6 The text of the letter seems closely related to the problems surrounding the visit the Ternatean Sultan Hamza paid to Hitu and the consequences of the new political relations as imposed by the VOC in 1637 (see Stravers, Van Fraassen and van der Putten 2004, 61–62; 178–85). I surmise that the letter originally may have been an attachment of the agreement between Sultan Hamza and the VOC.

laha Salahak Abdul Kadir ibn Syahbuddin, to the British East India Company dated 23 May 1658 (Gallop and Arps 1991, 38), and two handwritten narratives copied in Ambon at the beginning of the 18th century as presented in *A Jawi Sourcebook* by Vladimir Braginsky (2015, 54–55; 62–63). As Annabel Teh Gallop notes, even a cursory comparison between these documents and two early-19th-century letters from Ternate and Tidore she scrutinises for the same publication (Gallop 2015, 82–85) already shows that the handwriting of these documents differs markedly from the 'wispy and spidery' hand and specific form of some letters that are characteristic for the Moluccan chancery hand (Gallop 2015, 36). Below I will discuss a few palaeographic and orthographic characteristics of the writing in the copy of the *Hikayat Tanah Hitu* and indicate similarities with the other extant Malay documents mentioned above.

4 Characteristics in the writing of the *Tale of Hitu*

Taking a glance at the mise-en-page of the first page of the *Hikayat Tanah Hitu* text (Fig. 1), it is obvious that the text block takes a central position on the page with three wider and one smaller margin, the narrowest margin being on the side of the paper where the manuscript is bound. This layout is consistent throughout the manuscript, and we can see that the first page of the manuscript with the doodles in the left-hand, wider margin is the recto side while a possible title page (first recto) and start of the text (first verso) are missing (see Fig. 1).

The writing is regular but not refined. The most obvious characteristic is the rather elongated, slightly slanted top stroke of the letter *kāf* (*k/g*) above its straight upright 'trunk'.[7] While the tails of certain letters, particularly the *rā'* and *wāw*, are often nicely rounded and elongated, the handwriting overall does seem to be quite common and does not show any distinct characteristics which would set the manuscript apart from the bulk of other Malay manuscripts.

The orthography of some of the words is arguably more specific to this text or copyist, and to a certain degree also represents the conventions of the period and

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7 See Fig. 1, but it may be even more obvious on other pages, such as the page of the manuscript which was included as an illustration in van der Putten 2015, 51. The <g> can be distinguished from the <k> in the Jawi script by placing one or three dots above or below the character *kāf* (ک). In Malay texts, these dots quite often are omitted, especially in common words such as *juga* ('also'; spelled جوك [j-w-k]), but in *Hikayat Tanah Hitu* the opposite idiosyncrasy is applied by adding dots to the *kāf* in some words, even though these are normally spelled with a <k>, as for instance in the word kəluarga ('siblings, family') spelled ڬلورڬا [g-w-l-w-r-g-a].

place where the copy was made. What must be mentioned first and foremost here is the use of the *tashdid* or *shaddah*, a diacritical mark to strengthen and normally double the consonant in Arabic, which takes the form of small 'w' on top of the enhanced character. The borrowing of this diacritic in Jawi orthography has triggered quite a number of comments from scholars' earlier studies of Malay texts, which are described and discussed by Russell Jones (2005). The most common explanation for the use of the *tashdid* in Jawi orthography is that it would indicate a schwa (a mid central vowel [ə]) in the preceding syllable. As there is no specific diacritic in Arabic script for the schwa, most frequently referred to with the Javanese name *pĕpĕt* in Malay studies, an *alif* may possibly be used to indicate this vowel. However, as mentioned above, the half-vowels *alif*, *wāw* and *yā'*, used in Malay spelling to indicate the vowel, are normally included in the penultimate syllable which contains the word stress, whereas syllables containing a *pĕpĕt* most often are not stressed. The convention of the use of the *tashdid* in these cases seems logical, because geminating a consonant does seem to have an effect on the quality of the preceding vowel (cf. Khattab and Al-Tamimi 2008). As has been noted by several scholars, a similar method of geminating the following consonants to indicate a schwa is also found in Old Malay and especially Javanese inscriptions from South Sumatra and Central Java, which were written in a script derived from the southern Brahmi script (Jones 2005, 281–2). Mahdi notes that for the Brahmi script used in Old Malay inscriptions, consonants are geminated following a prefixal *–r*, such as in *marvvaṅun* ('to rise'), while in root words it is only once found in the Old Malay inscriptions found in South Sumatra in the cognate for Malay *bətuṃ* ('bamboo', *pattuṃ* in the inscription), but occurs more frequently in later inscriptions (see Mahdi 2005, 187–8).

Although logically we tend to look at Arabic phonology to describe the *tashdid*'s function and effect with regard to Malay orthography, most interestingly the indicated function of the diacritical mark for Malay is in agreement with James Collins's comments about the historical development of a Malay dialect in eastern Kalimantan. In a concise overview about these dialects, he notes that the Proto-Malay *pĕpĕt* in Berau Malay has merged with /a/, and that the gemination of consonants following a penultimate syllable which originally contained **ə* is historically related to this merger (Collins 2006, 39).

Although he states that these characteristics are not shared by Kutai Malay, the major other dialect in the region, the examples Collins gives for the Malay dialect of Berau mirror the system of Jawi spelling as we find it in the *Hikayat Tanah Hitu* and other texts and may indicate a common characteristic in Austronesian languages in which consonants are geminated under influence of a schwa in a preceding syllable.

In discussions about the inclusion of the *tashdid* in Jawi manuscripts, its use is usually considered as being an indication of the relatively old age of the manuscript, but as Russell Jones (2005, 289) has noted, this interpretation is not absolute, as we can also find *tashdid*s in 19th-century manuscripts. This being the case, however, I think that a frequent use of this diacritical mark in original Malay words does represent a somewhat archaic tradition which can tell us something about the age of the particular manuscript. I would argue that this is also the case with regard to the manuscript under discussion here and that, to a certain degree, the use of the *tashdid* indicates a certain convention which was current in the Malay world, more specifically in the eastern archipelago, in the 17th century. In the *Hikayat Tanah Hitu*, then, we find a rather frequent use of the *tashdid* on the following consonant after a *pĕpĕt* in a penultimate syllable of words such as *bənar* ('right, correct', بنّر spelled [b-n[w]-r]), *bərkəlahi* ('to fight', spelled بركلّا [b-r-k-l[w]-a])[8], *tətak* or *mənətak* ('to slash', spelled منتّع [m-n-t[w]-']), *mənang* (to win, spelled منّغ [m-n[w]-ng]), *sri* (honorific title in combination with sultan, spelled سرّي [s-r[w]-y]). This use of the *tashdid* occurs a few times in the other documents originating from the same time frame and region, for example, *tətak* and *bəsar* with a *tashdid* on the second consonant is found in the fragment of an undated letter preserved in the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin (MS Or. Fol. 409-1, see Fig. 3), while in the Malay contract from the same collection of manuscripts (MS Or. Fol. 409-2, 3), the *tashdid* only occurs systematically in the word *dia* (third person pronoun singular, spelled ديّ [d-y[w]]), which was possibly done to distinguish the word from the preposition *di* ('in, at'). The page of the manuscript copy of the *Tale of Isma Yatim* (*Hikayat Isma Yatim*) which illustrates Vladimir Braginsky's concise notes on the same (Braginsky 2015, 55) yields a better crop of *tashdid*s: in the first seven lines we find these diacritical marks used in the words *majəlis* ('council', spelled مجلّس [m-j-l[w]-s]), *sekalian* ('all', spelled سكلّين [s-k-l[w]-y-n]) and *duli* ('dust', part of a formula referring to the king, spelled دلّ [d-l[w]]). The latter spelling, which also occurs regularly in the *Hikayat Tanah Hitu*, may be connected to the Sanskrit origin of the word, while the other two both may indicate the schwa in the preceding syllable.

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8 This spelling occurs a few times in the *Hikayat Tanah Hitu*, sometimes without a *tashdid* and all of them without a final *yā'*. The undated letter in the Staatsbibliothek contains twice the same word spelled with the final *yā'* and without a *tashdid* (بكلاي [b-k-l-a-y], see Fig. 3, beginning of line 11 and 12).
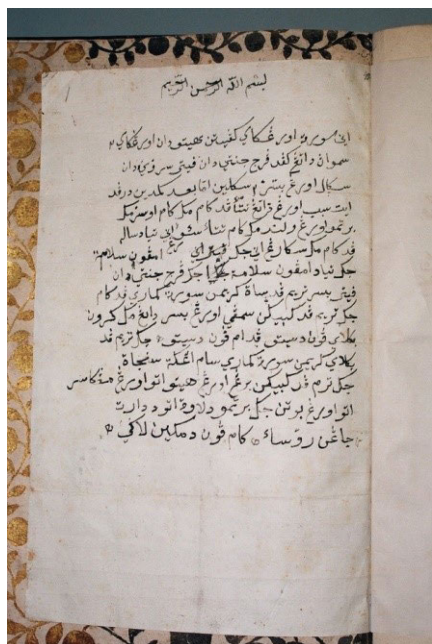
Fig. 3: Fragment of the undated letter from Hitu, probably late 1630s, Staatsbibliothek Berlin, MS Or. fol. 409-1[10]. © Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin - Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Orientabteilung.

The same page of the *Tale of Isma Yatim* also shows another characteristic which may be described as a spelling convention it shares with the writing of the *Tale of Hitu*. In line 4 of the page displayed in Braginsky's description (Braginsky 2015, 55), we find the word *jənis* ('sort') spelled as جينس (*jinis*), where the insertion of the half-vowel in the penultimate syllable may be observed as indication for the vowel of the final syllable. The same spelling method of writing the vowel of the ultimate syllable in the penultimate syllable which contains a schwa occur in a few instances in *Hikayat Tanah Hitu*, in words such as *kəris* ('dagger', spelled كيرس [k-y-r-s]), *bəlum* ('not yet', spelled بولم [b-w-l-m]) and *Jəpun* ('Japan', spelled جوڤن [j-w-p-n]). In a few instances in the *Tale of Hitu* we find *pəti* ('trunk, coffin') spelled as ڤيتّي [p-y-tᵂ-y], in which the convention of writing the assimilated half-vowel is found in combination with the inclusion of the *tashdid* on the following consonant. This spelling convention is restricted to a few words only, and it is obscure what might have triggered it. It seems clear, however, that representing the schwa in Malay texts in the Moluccas caused some problems, possibly related

to specific traits of local languages, and Malay dialects of the region generally lack this phoneme in their phonological system.[9]

Besides these regularities which are to a certain extent shared with some other texts from the early period of Malay writings, *Hikayat Tanah Hitu* also shows some particularities which may be considered idiosyncrasies of the scribe, possibly induced by the spoken vernacular, while others are rather commonly found in Malay manuscripts. These spelling particularities concern a somewhat regular, albeit certainly not consistent, omission of the voiceless glottal fricative /h/ in initial, medial and final positions, while in other instances the *h* is added in words which do not originally contain it. For instance, on the first page of the text in lines 6, 7 and 8, we find respectively *məmbawah*, *dibawah* ('to bring') and *labuan* ('mooring'), which in a perhaps more common orthography would be spelled *məmbawa*, *dibawa* and *labuhan* (see Fig. 1). Apart from this very common characteristic which is also found outside Old Malay manuscripts and the Malay language, we find a particular confusion of certain nasals and the omission of a glottal stop, most frequently before the suffix *–kan* is attached to the words. Some examples in the *Tale of Hitu* comprise *buankan* ('to discard, exile', instead of *buangkan*), *sampang* ('small boat', instead of *sampan*), *Seran* (name of an island, instead of *Seram*), *dinaikan* ('to rise, install', instead of *dinaikkan*), *enda* ('to want, will', instead of *hendak*) and *anaku* ('my child', instead of *anakku*). Both these characteristics may have been influenced by a vernacular language or a local dialect of Malay.

The use of vowel points in the Arabic script in the *Tale of Hitu* is mainly limited to the spelling of Arabic words and a few proper names, such as فَرْديْرِيْكْ حُوْتْمَنْ [fª-rᵒ-dyᵒ-ryⁱ-kᵒ ḥwᵘ-tᵒ-mª-nᵒ] (*firdirik hutman*: *Frederik de Houtman*). In a few other instances diacritics are provided to indicate the exact spelling of the word, which may be due to a lack of familiarity with the word on the part of the writer or copyist or due to his intention to highlight the word for another reason.

If the spelling may be considered rather inconsistent at times in this manuscript, the opposite can be said about the morphology, which quite closely follows common practice of most of the texts comprising the bulk of extant classical Malay narratives.[11] One of the basic characteristics of Malay morphology of transitive verbs is the assignment of roles to agent and object through the use of

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9 The local Malay dialect, Ambonese Malay, does not have a schwa (Collins 1980, 18), while in the local Austronesian languages, the schwa was changed into other vowel sounds (see Stresemann 1927, 95–100).

10 I am very grateful to Annabel Teh Gallop for providing me with the photographs of the manuscript held in Berlin. For a description and illustrations of these documents, see Wieringa and Hanstein 2015, 62–65.

11 In this category of traditional Malay narratives I do not include doctrinal Islamic treatises,

a specific form of the verb: when the action is viewed from the agent's perspective, the verb will be prefixed with *mə-* and a nasal which is homorganic with the initial sound of the verbal root. The nasal will precede the initial voiced sound of the root or will replace the initial sound if it is voiceless. For instance, the root *buang* will change into *məmbuang* ('throw away'), while *panggil* will transform into *məmanggil* ('to call'). It has been noticed that this general rule of prefixing voiced sounds is relatively new and that the occurrence of deviating forms in texts is an indication of their age (see Jones 2005). In older texts, we occasionally find forms such as *məmunuh* instead of *məmbunuh* ('to kill') and *məmuat* instead of *məmbuat* ('to make'), but the form *mənəngar* (and not *mləndəngar,* 'to hear') is quite persistent and commonly found in texts from the 19th century as well (for an early example see Braginsky 2015, 55, line 2).

The text of *Hikayat Tanah Hitu* somewhat consistently follows this general rule, which forms an indication that the author and/or copyist was well acquainted with the rules of the formal written register of this language. In prefixing the active verb marker *məN-*, hardly any deviating forms emerge compared to common practices. The text furthermore frequently and consistently uses the morphological possibilities available in Malay grammar to indicate a reciprocal action. In traditional Malay texts, the most obvious instance for this form is in the frequent war or fighting scenes in which the adversaries shoot, stab, hack or curse at each other. This is also the case in *Hikayat Tanah Hitu*, which contains forms such as *sərang-mənyərang* ('to attack each other'), *alah-mengalah* ('to defeat each other') and *tembak-mənembak* ('shoot at each other') as examples in which the second part of the reduplication is affixed while the first part consists of the root of the verb.[12] Another way to indicate reciprocity is by using the circumfix *bər-...-an* with possible reduplication of the root, which we find in examples such as *bərjanji-janjian* ('promise each other'), *bərtikam-tikaman* ('to stab at each other') and *bərsumpah-sumpahan* ('make a vow to each other').

Only in a few single instances do we find examples of more archaic grammatical forms, such as *dipəpatutan* ('to put in order', modern Indonesian *dipatutkan*) and *dibəbohonkan* ('to lie about something', modern Indonesian *dibohongi*).[13] These forms contain a partly reduplicated root form, which is extinct in modern standardised Malay.

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which seem to follow other standards heavily influenced by the Arabic originals they were translated from or based on.

12 *Sarang-manyarang* is spelled with *alif* in the penultimate syllable, while *tembak-menembak* is spelled with a final –h (ه) instead of a normal *qaf* (ق).

13 Again in the *Hikayat Isma Yatim*, copied in Ambon, we find a similar irregular form, *bəpərsəmbahkan* ('to present'; Braginsky 2015, 55, line 11), while a few lines further down we can find the regular passive form of the word in *dipərsəmbahkan* (ibid., line 17).

5 Conclusion

I need to emphasise that the limited scope of this paper only allows for a perfunctory and preliminary discussion of a topic as broad as the use of Jawi spelling in Malay manuscripts during a period of over three centuries and a distribution over such a vast region. I have given a short survey of points brought forward in previous studies and described some palaeographic and orthographic characteristics of the writing found in a manuscript copied in the mid-17th century in Ambon, which I compared with the writing in a few documents originating from the same period and region.

Older discussions about Jawi orthography mainly deal with the ways in which vowels are represented, since Arabic usually indicates only three long vowels. I have given specific attention to the *tashdid*, frequently occurring in the text of the *Hikayat Tanah Hitu* and in some of the other extant Malay documents, demonstrating a usage which may be in agreement with certain historical developments in geminating consonants and a merger of the schwa into /a/, as noted by James Collins for Berau Malay.

Furthermore, the inconsistencies in the spelling of words I have touched on may reflect phonological characteristics of vernaculars and local dialects which are accommodated by the Jawi script, thereby providing a written link bridging the different repertoires of communication. It does not seem too surprising that the majority of correspondences in the use of *tashdid* in the *Tale of Hitu* were found in texts of the same genre of extended narratives which were also circulating in the Malay world by way of mouth, next to their written form preserved in the extant manuscripts. In the vast cultural realm of the Malay world it may be difficult to find a homogeneous body of texts that provide many indications of standardised traditions, but collections of unstandardised consistencies as accommodated by the Jawi script have certainly proven to be sufficient to communicate through time and space and provide the ambiguity appreciated by interlocutors with different linguistic backgrounds. This shared cultural feature of different literary traditions from such a vast geographical space has certainly assisted in considering their ensemble as one 'Malay' tradition, however heterogeneous this may be.

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