

Early Muslim Printing in Southeast Asia

I. PROUDFOOT

Asian History Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, Australia

In 1854 an Indonesian Muslim, Muḥammad Azharī having just returned to Palembang from the pilgrimage to Mecca, set up a lithographic press to print the Qur'ān with Malay notes. To Dutch colonial scholars, this signalled the adoption of print by Southeast Asian Muslims. Lithography found favour with Muslims, being well suited to reproducing calligraphy and particularly the text of the Qur'ān, for aesthetic and ritual reasons. Azharī had bought his press in Singapore, where missionary experiments with lithography for Arabic script had recently produced promising results. However, his inspiration was more likely the flourishing Muslim presses in In-

dia which had raised lithography to a fine art and demonstrated that printing religious books, including the Qur'ān, could be lucrative. Thus this Indian Muslim printing revolution spilled over into Southeast Asia more or less contemporaneously with its arrival in the Middle East. In succeeding decades Muslim printing flourished in Southeast Asia, centred in British Singapore to avoid restrictive Dutch colonial press regulations. The first effect of Muslim printing was to intensify and standardise orthodox Muslim learning, while democratising access to knowledge.

In 1855 the Dutch District Officer in charge of Palembang, in south Sumatra, presented the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences with a copy of the Qur'ān. It had been published the previous year by a native of the district, Muḥammad Azharī. It excited some interest among members of the Society, for they believed it to be the fruit of the first indigenous press to appear in the Dutch East Indies. If so, it would indeed be the first in Southeast Asia.

In reality the honour of being the earliest publication issued on a non-European press goes to a book printed in Surabaya in 1853. A copy of this work has very recently been identified in the Leiden University Library by Kaptein. It was the *Sharaf al-Ānām*, a text recited to celebrate the Prophet's birth, printed by Ḥusayn bin Muḥammad al-Habshī, a Ḥaḍramī Arab resident in Surabaya (1). There is little doubt that this text, or perhaps another from the same press, was the earliest Muslim publication in the Indies. The Palembang printer, Muḥammad Azharī, therefore cannot claim the first prize in this race, but his Qur'ān is interesting just because the Batavian So-

ciety believed it to be the first native publication and took the trouble to gather some information about the circumstances of a momentous event.

The Society immediately requested further information from the new District Officer, who made a visit to the press. It also commissioned one of its members, an eminent Dutch scholar of Malay, to write up a memorandum on the book and the circumstances of its publication. Von Dewall's brief notice was published in the Society's Journal. It goes straight to the heart of the matter, seizing on the significance of the event.

Considering what a tremendous revolution and what speedy progress in the whole field of arts and sciences was brought in train by book printing in Europe, we can expect that this first attempt at native printing will not fail to bring many advantages for the enlightening of our native population (2).

For the Batavian savants, the Palembang Qur'ān could hardly have appeared at a more fortuitous time. Not many years earlier, the Society itself had

been engaged in a *contretemps* over its right to operate a press independent of the colonial government. The 1848 Dutch constitutional reforms, however, had bestowed freedom of the press upon European and colonial territories alike, and for the first time Dutch printers independent of the government had set up shop in Batavia. It had thus only very recently become possible to report the existence of an independent press without fear of reprisals for its operator, much less to imagine a benign official interest in its operation. Ironically, by the time von Dewall's memorandum was published, the Palembang press which it described had become subject to the 1856 decree on press regulation (3). Through this punitive law, the colonial government reasserted its antipathy towards a free press. But for a brief time liberal ideas of enlightenment through scientific progress had been given a free rein.

The intellectual environment in Batavia in 1855 must have made the appearance of the Palembang Qur'an seem all the more welcome. However it is important to distinguish between the causes of the attention which the Palembang Qur'an attracted in European circles and the causes of its coming into existence. The book itself, and the account of how it came to be published are sufficient to turn our eyes away from Batavia, and towards Singapore, Cairo and Bombay.

It is not surprising that Palembang should have been the locale for the first regional printing of the Qur'an. From a Muslim perspective, Palembang was a significant Southeast Asian centre in the nineteenth century. In the 1850s it boasted the largest Arab community in Southeast Asia (4). It shared the highest rate of participation in the hajj with West Sumatra (5). Muḥammad Azharī, the publisher of the Palembang Qur'an, was himself a third-generation hajī, both his father and his grandfather having also undertaken the pilgrimage. Indeed, it was upon his return from a period of many years in the Holy Land that Azharī embarked upon his printing enterprise.

Azharī's experience in the years away from Palembang cannot have been confined to Mecca. His laqab, or cognomen, suggests that he spent some of those years in study at al-Azhar, the great centre of Muslim learning in Cairo. Moreover, his journey home from the Middle East was by ship to Singapore; and this, especially in the days before the Suez Canal had opened, typically meant coast-

ing around the ports of India, and very likely calling at Bombay. Finally it was on his return to Singapore that Azharī bought the lithographic press he would set up near Palembang for printing the Qur'an.

While in Cairo and in India, Azharī will have had first hand exposure to Muslim printing. In Cairo, like Istanbul, printing was still mainly in government hands, still small in quantity, and little focussed on religious texts. A handful of private presses had begun operating in Egypt in the 1850s, but it was not to be until after Azharī's stay, in the 1860s, that private printing became really significant (6). Nevertheless, in Azharī's time Indian printed books will have been circulating in Cairo and Mecca, for a vigorous centre of Muslim publishing had emerged in India.

Indian Muslim printers used a new printing technique, lithography. Lithography had been popularised in Europe during the years 1806–1817,(7) and brought to India by the East India Company government in 1824. In Europe lithography was used mainly for art work, but it was quickly taken up by Muslims in India and developed into a fine medium for book printing. By 1850 major centres of Muslim publishing were well established at Lucknow-Cawnpore, Agra, Delhi, Lahore and Hyderabad (Deccan). Lucknow alone had more than a dozen lithographic presses, all in Muslim hands, and the presses of Lucknow-Cawnpore alone had turned out about 700 titles, some in up to 10 editions, mainly comprising elementary religious instruction, tracts and polemics. All the important towns in northern India had their own printing presses. A contemporary observer estimated that there were about 112 such presses in different parts of the country (8).

The new printing technique was an important ingredient in this story. Lithography was seized on by Indian Muslims, and later by Muslim printers elsewhere, as a practical form of printing which could serve Muslim needs effectively. Its complete flexibility in reproducing graphic forms meant that lithography was capable of fine reproduction of calligraphy, and achieved immense popularity for that reason. Lithography could accurately convey the grace and fluidity of a good manuscript, in all respects except the use of colour – and that too was achieved sometimes by overprinting, by hand rubrication, or by the gilt stamping which Azharī applied to his printing of the Qur'an (9).

This chemical process of printing was cheap and accessible. Its simplicity was stunning. In 1806 its inventor, Senefelder, launched lithography by reproducing a note written by the crown prince of Bavaria in court before his very eyes (10). Not fifty years later, in Sumatra, Azharī would repeat this novel display for the visiting Dutch District Officer. He extemporised a poem of welcome, which he wrote out on paper, applied to the lithographic stone, and printed on the spot. The equipment needed was simple and cheap, the main skill being that of the copyist, and the main cost that of the paper. Lithography thus acted as a direct extension of the manuscript tradition. A calligrapher could become a printer. For Muslims, this was more than a matter of convenience or continuity with old ways. It was important for those who scrupled over the need to reproduce the Qurʾān in writing by the pen, given the references in the Qurʾān itself to the pen as an instrument conveying divine instruction to mankind (68:1, 96:4) (11). With lithography, the merit accruing from the copying of the Qurʾān, hadīth and poems on the Prophet was retained (12). These embodiments of religious truth could be kept, undefiled, in Muslim hands; their printing could be achieved without impurity. The Qurʾān can only be touched or recited by those in a state of ritual purity. The text of Sūrah 56 verse 79, to this effect, appears on the title page of the Palembang Qurʾān, and was commonly displayed on manuscript and printed copies of the Qurʾān alike. Like calligraphers, who had to renew their ablutions constantly while copying the word of God, lithographic copyists could take the necessary precautions. Calligraphers were destined for paradise because of this work (13). Azharī, as a lithographic printer, could claim this merit too.

Thus, with lithography, the printing of the Qurʾān became practicable, acceptable, – and lucrative. The first private press in Lucknow commissioned a Qurʾān selection, the Panjsūrah from an esteemed calligrapher (14). The first book lithographed in Persia was, not coincidentally, a Qurʾān, also copied in the hand of a famous calligrapher (15). Azharī's decision to print first the Qurʾān, the Book of the people of the Book, was a natural one, for much the same reasons as Gutenberg had printed Bibles. Had Azharī also heard of the good returns made by Indian printers? In 1850, a printing of a Qurʾān in Arabic and Urdu

made its publisher a fortune at 5 rupees, that is about 10 shillings, per copy (16). Azharī was able to repeat the performance when he printed the Qurʾān with a Malay introduction. He could sell his printed copies of the Qurʾān at the very considerable sum of 25 guilders, about £2, and find a ready market. (Sale of a mere twenty copies would have recouped the cost of Azharī's equipment. Even allowing for the cost of good paper and bindings, his outlay will have been very quickly covered).

On his return to Singapore, the last staging point before his return home to Palembang, Azharī purchased his lithographic press. In Singapore he would have found five commercial presses, all European-owned. All did typographic printing; four also used lithography for jobs involving art work, such as the printing of invoices, bills of exchange, plans and the like. One of the four, the Mission Press, used lithography more ambitiously. This press was run by a free-lance Protestant missionary, B. P. Keasberry. Keasberry recognised the potential of lithography for reproducing Jawi, that is Malay in the Arabic script. In 1849 he used this technique to publish the autobiography of the Malay man of letters and dragoman ʿAbd Allāh bin ʿAbd al-Qādir, copied in ʿAbd Allāh's own hand. Keasberry later put out a lithographed Jawi magazine for school and public circulation (17). This might have been an independent application of the technology by a resource individual, but is just as likely that Keasberry (who was born in Hyderabad) was in touch with developments in India. No doubt Indian lithographs had also begun to circulate in Singapore.

Keasberry used the profits generated by his press to support Malay mission schools, while at the same time training schoolboys in the craft of printing. The boys were trained in typographic printing and book binding, with the result that printing press operatives employed in Singapore's European printeries were often Keasberry's former Malay students. But not only these students learnt the printing trade. The most qualified Malay printer was undoubtedly ʿAbd Allāh bin ʿAbd al-Qādir himself. He had been taught all aspects of typographic printing by the American missionary North, and relates in his autobiography how he cast and set type and operated the mission press to print proclamations issued by Raffles at the time of Singapore's foundation.

ʿAbd Allāh continued to work closely with the mission press under Keasberry, collaborating with him in producing his innovative lithographed books and magazines in Malay. Now, it may or may not have been from the Mission Press that Azharī bought his lithographic equipment. It is rather likely, though, that he discussed his project with ʿAbd Allāh bin ʿAbd al-Qādir. The two had more than a common interest in printing, for Muḥammad Azharī happened to be returning from a long stay in the Middle East just as ʿAbd Allāh was planning to undertake his own pilgrimage. (ʿAbd Allāh would depart from Singapore on 29 Jumadaʿl-awwal 1270, or 27 February 1854).

Azharī was also at least vaguely aware of the printing initiative of the previous year in Surabaya. He passed this knowledge on to the District Officer during his inspection of Azharī’s press. Whether Azharī picked up this knowledge in Singapore as well, or whether he became aware of it through connections linking the two large Arab communities in Palembang and Surabaya we do not know. His intelligence was not followed up by the Batavian Society.

The contexts in which the Palembang Qurʾān was hatched thus comprise an intriguing mix of Western technology, colonial setting and Muslim initiative.

Azharī’s Qurʾān was followed the next year by two books from another lithographic press, this one owned by the Sultan of Riau, who ruled the islands immediately south of Singapore. One of the books was on astronomical calculations, the other a textbook for students, Bustān al-Kātibm(18). The proximity of both Palembang and Riau to Singapore is not coincidental. There is little doubt that, like Azharī the Sultan of Riau had bought his press in Singapore. Then, in the decade beginning in 1860, at least nineteen Malay titles were put out by Muslim printers working in Singapore. Subsequently this hub of inter-island trade and the pilgrim traffic proved the most advantageous centre for a burgeoning Muslim publishing industry. Singapore’s advantages of communications and religious geography were enhanced by Britain’s laissez-faire rule. Printers from Palembang and Java came to set up shop in Singapore not only for commercial reasons but also to evade the repressive Dutch East Indies Press Law of 1856. The result was that Singapore remained the pre-eminent regional centre of Muslim publishing

for the remainder of the nineteenth century. For the next three or four decades, Muslim lithographers in Singapore supplied the Southeast Asian community with copious vernacular materials, mainly in Malay, but later also in Javanese and Sundanese.

Von Dewall rightly saw Azharī’s publication of a Qurʾān for Malay readers as a liminal event in the evolution of native society. It was the local signal of a major turning point in the history of Islam. Although Southeast Asia followed India, the Palembang Qurʾān was by no means a late initiative in Muslim printing. It so happens that J. Pedersen, in his standard work *The Arabic Book*, gives 1854 precisely as the date of the first Muslim printing of the Qurʾān, which he locates in Calcutta (19). This is an error, but one which might escape notice because of the generally late adoption of print by Muslims. It is worth recalling that the first Qurʾān printed in the Middle East did not appear until 1864 in Cairo; and that no printing of any sort was done at Mecca until 1883.

As in India, though on a far smaller scale, Southeast Asia’s new Muslim presses were first set to work in the vernacular promotion of Islam. The early publications were “kitab jawi”, books used in religious study. They comprised compendia of law, guides to prayer and ritual, popular guides to dogma and the pillars of Islam, texts for devotional use, and instruction in the recitation of the Qurʾān. Popular Islamic literature on heroic and romantic themes also sold well.

The productivity of print was unprecedented. The great calligraphers of old might copy forty or fifty Qurʾāns in a lifetime. A work-a-day calligrapher, or “near sighted goat”, could manage somewhat more (20). But a lithographic printer could I run off a thousand in a matter of months. When he was visited by the District Officer, Azharī’s current print run was already “several hundred”. The cumulative effect of multiple print editions was overwhelming, the more so as, later in the century, the output of Singapore’s Muslim presses was supplemented by even greater numbers of books in Malay, Arabic and Javanese shipped in from India and the Middle East. By the last decade of the nineteenth century, lithographed Qurʾāns, digests of law, tafsīr and the like in Malay and Javanese were being printed in Bombay (along with many works of popular literature), Cawnpore, Mecca, Cairo and Istanbul. The penetration achieved

through the multiplication of texts in print cannot be overestimated. The dissemination of books does not require frequent regular communications, as newspapers and magazines do (21). These early books were carried across the archipelago aboard seasonal native sailing craft, and passed along the informal networks linking Muslim teachers and centres of learning.

The impact of these religious books did not stem from their novelty or unorthodox content. In the first decade or so of Singapore printing, the two major Malay compilations of law were published, al-Ranīrī's *Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*, and al-Banjārī's *Sabīl al-Muhtadīm* (in two editions). These date from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries respectively. When the first Singapore publications in Javanese appeared, later in the nineteenth century, they included another digest of law, al-Samarānī's *Majmū'ah al-Sharī'at* (in two editions), and a Javanese version of al-Ghazālī's *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (in three editions). Alongside such dogmatic works were others of popular devotion, like Mawlid texts in Malay and Javanese, the lives of the Prophets, the story of Muḥammad Ḥanafiyah and early Islam, and booklets of popular instruction in the pillars of the faith. As unexceptionable as such works may seem, the effect of their sudden wide dissemination through print was momentous. It impelled local Muslims toward a better-informed orthodox understanding of the sharī'at, while becoming a little less reliant on mediation by 'ulamā', who themselves gained more direct access to authoritative texts. In the case of the Palembang Qur'ān, Azharī's inclusion of brief opening notes on tajwīd, the science of recitation, suggests that he envisaged his books being used for instruction in elementary Qur'ān recitation. Once printed Qur'ān, imported from Bombay, became widely current in Southeast Asia, children in Qur'ān schools would no longer depend upon receiving the text from their teacher, written across their slates or on scraps of paper (22). For more advanced levels of Qur'ān study a major treatise on tajwīd was published in Singapore the 1870s, which included indexes to the numbered pages of a standard print version of the Qur'ān. Again, through the use of printed texts, dependence upon the teacher as dispenser of knowledge is subtly diminished. Such printed books offer a new way of participating in scholarship, which relies

on individual scholarly reference, not the "possession" of a memorised text passed on by a teacher who "possessed" it (23). These are steps toward a more scripturalist Islam (24).

The initiative of al-Habshī Azharī, and the Singapore printers lay in doing what they saw that other Muslims had done: they acquired a Western technology and adapted it to serve Muslim ends. Their actions mark the beginning of the print era in Muslim Southeast Asia. This local revolution was a part of the larger revolution which was engulfing the Muslim world. It set in train fundamentally divergent impulses: on the one hand an initial consolidation of orthodox doctrine, on the other a democratisation of access to knowledge. These effects of print would intensify in the twentieth century as local and international communications improved, and a new print medium - the periodical and newspaper press - appeared. Some of the Southeast Asian outcomes have been documented in Roff's study of *The Origins of Malay Nationalism* and Deliar Noer's account of *The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia* (25).

Postscript

The Palembang Qur'ān was, as van Dewall foreshadowed, a harbinger of great change. The change would be as revolutionary as von Dewall anticipated, but it did not lead to the kind of liberal enlightenment he probably had in mind, nor would it be accomplished under benevolent Dutch protection. A copy of the Palembang Qur'ān was put on display in the 1883 International Colonial Exposition at Amsterdam (26). Thirty years after its publication, it still served as an icon of native progress, partly for the rather sad reason that liberal hopes had been dashed. Native presses did not flourish under Dutch rule. Printers preferred the benign neglect of British rule in Singapore. In Sumatra, indeed, there was little further native printing until the close of the century (27). In Java, the only extensive Muslim publisher was the government mufti, Sayyid 'Uthmān bin 'Abd Allāh in Batavia, operating more or less on licence. For the rest of the century, the presses of the Dutch East Indies were in European, Eurasian, and Chinese hands. Meanwhile the Muslim presses of Singapore pursued their own agenda.

The Palembang Qur'ān today lies in the bookstacks of the Indonesian National Library, one

book among others, the early interest it generated now forgotten.

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Translation of von Dewall's report to the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences on the Palembang Qur'ān. (Words in Arabic script in the original are italicised here).

A Native Printing Press at Palembang

In 1855 the then District Officer of Palembang, Mr. C.A. de Brauw, presented the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences with a copy of a locally lithographed Qur'ān. Considering what a tremendous revolution and what speedy progress in the whole field of arts and sciences was brought in train by book printing in Europe, we can expect that this first attempt at native printing will not fail to bring many advantages for the enlightening of our native population.

Having been so requested, I shall endeavour to give a description of the externals and arrangement of the book - the contents of the Qur'ān being surely known.

The book was, as we can read on the last page, written by Kemas Hājī Muḥammad Azharī in the town of Palembang, in the village Pedatuan, and completed on Monday 14 *zū'l-qa'dah* 1270 (7 August 1854).

The script is quite clean and neat, and is the so-called Lahore script (*khat lāhūr*). (I refer to the profusion of physiognomies - so to speak - which the Arabic script has adopted in the principal Muslim lands, through various peculiarities in the strokes of the letters and their conjunctions. Thus we have Istanbul script, Egyptian script, Maghribi script, Meccan, Persian, Hindustani etc (28).

The text of each page is framed, in the usual way. The pages are numbered continuously by numerals at their feet; at the head of each page is the name of the *sūrah* [chapter]. The thirty *juz'* [sections] are indicated in the margin. The end of each verse is marked by a small golden circle above the line of script. The verses are not numbered, that practice occurring, if I am not mistaken, only in Qur'ān printed in Europe. The catchword (*rakibah*) is found on the second side of each leaf, outside the frame on the lower left hand corner.

The first page, as might be expected, is the title

page. It is divided into three sections abundantly decorated with arabesques etc., of which the topmost and bottommost are of equal size, while the middle area is about twice the size of either of the outer sections.

In the topmost section is, on a black ground with the letters left white, verse 203 of Surah 7, called *Al-A'rāf*, "The Dividing Wall", which reads in translation:

And when you do not bring up a (Qur'ānic verse to them, they say, "Why don't you make one up?" Say: "I follow only what my Lord reveals to me." These revelations are an evident proof from your Lord, and a guidance and grace to those who believe (29).

The middlemost block contains a diagram comprising three concentric rings, and the central area which they create. In the centre, which is black, in letters which are left white, is the phrase *Allāhu akbar*, i.e. God is great. The innermost and outermost rings are decorated with arabesques and other figures, while the middle ring, which is white, has in black letters, verses 77 to 80 of *Sūrah* 56, called *Al-Wāqī'ah* ("The Inevitable", i.e. the Day of Judgement), of which the translation is:

That this is indeed the glorious Qur'ān. (Inscribed) in the well-kept book. Only those can touch it who are clean. It has been revealed by the Lord of all the worlds.

The bottom section has the same format and decoration as those above it. It contains verse 98 o. *Sūrah* 16, called *Al-Naḥl* ("The Bees") which reads in translation:

So, when you recite the Qur'ān seek refuge in God from Satan the execrable.

A sort of introduction, in Malay, begins on page 2 and runs through to page 15. These first 15 pages are not numbered; On page 2 is a diagram depicting the mouth and the other organs of speech, with the letters of the Arabic alphabet placed beside the organ which is most involved in its utterance, from *hā* in the depths of the throat to *mīm* on the tips of the lips. A short description in Malay around the edge of the diagram identifies the letters classified in this way.

Pages 3 to 7 contain rules for the pronunciation of certain letters in particular contexts, taken wholly from the Arabic treatises on grammar.

On page 8 are listed 16 places occurring in the Qur'ān at which the Prophet made a pause (*al waqf*), which is also commended as obligatory (*wājib*) for the faithful. Beside each place is listed the page (*muka* - Malay) at which it occurs.

The remaining pages contain indications of the pauses which need to be kept in mind during readings of the Qur'ān, following the prophet himself and later scholars, and in addition a few pages on the sūrah and juz', and a short statement on the number of letters with which the Qur'ān is written (333,671).

The first two pages, on which the first sūrah and the beginning of the second appear, are profusely decorated with arabesques. After the last sūrah, there is a prayer which is said after reading the Qur'ān. The final page we have already discussed. The binding is provided with a flap (penu-tup) in the Arabic manner, and decorated in gold, richly but tastelessly. On the flap with which the front part of the book would be covered is found sūrah 56 verse 79, already dealt with, in impressed letters, gold on gold. Below that, on both sides, appears a stamp with a twofold combination of the words *Muḥammadun Rasulu 'lāhu* (Muḥammad is the Messenger of God).

In response to a request from the secretariat of the Batavian Society for some information regarding the press at Palembang, the present District Officer, Mr. A. van der Ven, wrote as follows:

The Koran mentioned therein was turned out by the native Kemas Mohamad Asaharie, born and raised in these parts, though he has passed many years in Mecca.

Returning thence he procured a lithographic press in Singapore for 500 guilders [about £42], with which he has now printed several hundred Korans for which he finds ready buyers at 25 guilders [about £2] per item.

No other printing of any significance was carried out.

The written text was applied to the stone by means of specially prepared paper. The operator has achieved an astonishing speed in writing out the pages. As evidence of this, I enclose a little piece of poetry which was prepared and printed in my presence in a matter of moments. It is, more-

over, a notable instance of native politeness.

The printing establishment of Kemas Mohamad Asaharie is the only one here. I believe there may be another similar in Surabaya.

The piece of poetry forwarded by Mr. van der Ven (which I cannot recommend either for spelling or for style), runs as follows:

Dengarkan tuan suatu berita
Khabar yang baik diberi nyata
Tabik dan hormat adalah serta
Kepadanya raja orang yang bertakhta
Adalah raja masa sekarang
Beritanya baik kepada orang
Di gunung seja[h]tera dari berperang
Perintahnya juga terlalu terang
Untungnya raja tiada terperi
Namanya masyhur setiap negeri
Rakyatnya kasih beserta negeri
Padanya Tiang Alam menyerahkan diri
Sahaya di negeri beberapa lama
Belum berapat raja yang utama
Baharulah sekarang sahaya menerima
Raja nan ingat kepada agama
Di dalam Landrat terlalu hebatnya
Apabila datang masa waktunya
Di dalam agama akan pekerjaannya
Disuruhnya bangun segala yang sertanya

Translation:

Harken, sirs, to a message, good tidings made evident, accompanied by greetings and respect to the crowned Prince. In these times there is a Prince whose repute is high among men. The mountains are at peace after being at war, under his transparent rule. The fortune of this Prince is exceptional; his name is famous in all lands; his subjects love and fear him; Tiang Alam surrendered to him. I, who have been in this land for so long, never came across a superior prince; I now receive a Prince who is mindful of religion. He is awe-inspiring as he presides in the District Court; in the fullness of time, in matters of religion he has all who are with him rise to their duty.

H. von Dewall

Von Dewall did not have to explain to the learned members of the Batavian Society that the crowned Prince who put down the 1845 revolt by Tiang Alam in the hinterland of Palembang was none

other than District Officer de Brauw, who had first brought this copy of the Qur'ān to their notice.

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