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**SUPPORTING THE HAJJ FROM A BUDDHIST KINGDOM:
A MALAY LETTER FROM SYAIKH SALIH DAUD IN MECCA
TO BOWON WICHAICHAN, DEPUTY KING OF SIAM, 1875**

*(Sokongan Kerajaan Buddha terhadap Ibadah Haji: Surat Melayu Syaikh Salih Daud
di Mekah kepada Bowon Wichaichan, Timbalan Raja Siam (1875))*

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ABSTRACT

Previous scholarship on Southeast Asian Hajj epistolography has treated letters exchanged between Mecca-based Jawi scholars and correspondents in the Malay Archipelago as evidence of an exclusively inter-Muslim network of religious transmission, social relations and economic exchange, occasionally sustained by the trade of Southeast Asian and Arabian goods. A newly identified Malay-language letter in the National Archives of Thailand challenges this model. Found among the papers of Bowon Wichaichan, Siam's last Deputy King (r. 1868–1885), the 1875 letter from a Malay official in Mecca, Syaikh Salih Daud, acknowledges receipt of valuable trade goods sent via Malay pilgrims, announces the return of Arabian gifts, and requests the donation of white cloth for tents to shelter Muslim pilgrims at Arafat. The correspondence shows that the Siamese Deputy King, a senior member of a Southeast Asian Buddhist dynasty, actively participated in the commercial transactions that accompanied the Hajj, relying on the assistance of Muslim pilgrims and local brokers. It further suggests a legitimate expectation, on the part of the Muslim participants, that this cooperation might translate into royal patronage extended to pilgrims from the Siamese kingdom or its Malay vassal states. This article presents a critical edition, annotated translation, and images of the letter, making this unusual witness to nineteenth-century Siamese Buddhist–Malay Muslim relations available for the first time.

Keywords: Malay letters, Malay seals, Buddhist–Muslim relations, Siam, deputy king, hajj.

ABSTRAK

Kajian terdahulu mengenai epistolografi Haji di Asia Tenggara umumnya mentafsirkan kegiatan surat-menyurat antara ulama Jawi yang bermastautin di Mekah dengan ilmuwan di Kepulauan Melayu sebagai bukti kewujudan suatu jaringan eksklusif sesama Muslim yang berperanan sebagai wahana penyebaran ilmu agama, pembinaan hubungan sosial serta pertukaran ekonomi, yang pada keadaan tertentu disokong oleh perdagangan barangan dari Asia Tenggara dan Semenanjung Arab. Walau bagaimanapun, penemuan sepucuk surat berbahasa Melayu yang sebelum ini tidak dikenal pasti dan kini disimpan di Arkib Negara Thailand mencabar kerangka interpretasi tersebut. Surat bertarikh 1875 itu, yang ditemukan dalam koleksi dokumen Bowon Wichaichan, Timbalan Raja Siam yang terakhir (1868–1885), ditulis oleh seorang pegawai Melayu di Mekah, iaitu Syaikh Salih Daud. Kandungannya mengesahkan penerimaan barangan dagangan bernilai yang dihantar melalui para jemaah haji Melayu, memaklumkan penghantaran balasan berupa hadiah dari Tanah Arab, serta memohon sumbangan kain putih untuk pembinaan khemah bagi melindungi para jemaah haji Muslim ketika berada di Arafah. Kandungan surat tersebut memperlihatkan bahawa Timbalan Raja Siam, sebagai seorang tokoh kanan dalam dinasti Buddha Asia Tenggara, terlibat secara aktif dalam urusan niaga perdagangan yang mengiringi pelaksanaan ibadah haji dengan memanfaatkan jaringan bantuan para jemaah haji Muslim dan perantara tempatan. Pada masa yang sama, surat ini turut menunjukkan wujudnya andaian yang munasabah dalam kalangan orang Islam yang terlibat bahawa kerjasama sedemikian berpotensi diterjemahkan kepada pemberian naungan diraja terhadap para jemaah haji yang berasal dari Kerajaan Siam atau negeri-negeri Melayu di bawah naungannya. Makalah ini memuatkan edisi kritis, terjemahan beranotasi serta imej surat tersebut, sekali gus memperkenalkan buat pertama kalinya sumber istimewa ini sebagai bukti penting dalam memahami hubungan antara masyarakat Buddha Siam dengan masyarakat Melayu Islam pada abad kesembilan belas.

Kata kunci: Surat Melayu, cap mohor Melayu, hubungan Buddha–Islam, Siam, timbalan raja, haji.

INTRODUCTION¹

In the early centuries when Southeast Asians made the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca, at a time when the journey by sea took many months, most visitors from the Malay archipelago would stay for

¹ The document presented in this article was first discovered by Jan Dressler in 2013 in the course of his doctoral research on the office of the Deputy King of Siam, and he requested the assistance of Annabel Gallop, who kindly provided the Romanized transliteration and translation of the Malay text. In this article, the sections on Malay letters and seals were written by A. Gallop, while those on the Deputy King and on Muslim communities in Siam were written by J. Dressler, extracted from his doctoral thesis (Dressler *forthcoming*); Claude and ChatGPT were used to enhance the English grammar and style of these sections.

long periods of study in the Holy Cities.² In one of his typically self-referencing final stanzas of his poems, the 16th century Malay Sufi writer Hamzah Fansuri mentioned his stay in Mecca: *Hamzah Fansuri di dalam Mekah / mencari Tuan di Bait al-Ka'bah*, 'Hamzah Fansuri in Mecca / Sought the Lord at the Shrine of the Ka'bah' (Drewes and Brakel 1986: 108-109). Eminent *Jawi* – as all Muslims from Southeast Asia were known – sojourners of the 17th century included Yusuf al-Makassari (1627-1699) and Abdul Rauf of Singkel (c.1615-c.1693), who spent over twenty years in Arabia before returning to Aceh in 1661 to become Syaikh al-Islam at the court of the queen, Sultanah Tajul Alam. The end of the following century saw one of the greatest influx of Malays to Mecca due to the repeated Siamese attacks on Patani between 1785 and 1838, resulting in the destruction and obliteration of the royal court and marketplace. Many Patani families moved and settled in the Haramayn, with Syaikh Daud bin Abdullah al-Fatani (1769-1847) emerging as their leader and attracting many students (Bradley 2015). These scholarly networks or *jaringan ulama* have been the subject of much study, particularly focussing on the role of Mecca-based Jawi scholars in the transmission back to Southeast Asia of reformist Islamic thinking through the composition of new works or the translation and recension into Malay of important Arabic texts (Azra 2004; Fathurahman 2012; Peacock 2024).

Over the past few years a number of publications of letters sent back to Southeast Asia from the Jawi community in Mecca have cast new light on the social aspects of these theological networks. These letters, usually written by pilgrims or longer-term residents in the Holy Cities, were addressed to family members, friends, patrons or spiritual mentors in their homes across the Malay archipelago. The contents are varied, illustrating not only the warmth of family bonds, but also the economic networks that underpinned subsistence whilst performing the Hajj and fulfilling religious duties. Many pilgrims and scholars were sustained during their time in Arabia through the sale of products brought with them from Southeast Asia, while goods from Mecca such as dried fruits and religiously significant souvenirs – such as caps (*kopiah*), prayer beads (*tasbeih*) and, notably, books – were sent back to the Malay world as gifts and also in search of profit. Letters were written either in Arabic or Malay, depending on the relationship between the correspondents, and the content of the letter.

The first important such publication was an edition by Masykur Syafruddin (2023) of nine documents in Malay and Arabic relating to communications between Aceh and Mecca. These range from a letter in Arabic of 1843 from a Yemeni pilgrim ship broker concerning the planned collection of passengers from Samalanga (Syafruddin 2023: 4-6), to a letter from Muhammad Asyiq in Mecca to Haji Uthman in Keumala in 1863, stating that his questions had been conveyed to both the Shafi'i and Hanafi muftis, and their responses had been sent to Teungku di Balee in Krueng Keumala (Syafruddin 2023: 21-26). The Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia holds at least six letters, mostly relating to Patani, that were included in the 2025 exhibition *Oceans that Speak* and its accompanying catalogue. Among the most interesting is a letter from Hajjah Wan Chik in Patani to her son Wan Ismail in Mecca in 1898, informing him that the books he sent have not sold well. Instead, she requests him to send over only Indian imprints of certain titles including the *Idah al-Bab* (a well-known guide to marriage law by Daud bin Abdullah al-Fatani), and not Mecca printed

² For a compendium of accounts of the Hajj pilgrimage from Southeast Asia from the 15th to the 20th century, see Chambert-Loir (2013).

editions as these could not make a profit (Siti Marina 2024: 194, 386). Another letter was despatched from Mecca in 1866 by Abdul Rahman of Kelantan, a scribe who was training in Ottoman 'Istanbul-style' calligraphy (*menyurat Istanbul*), to the Sultan of Pontianak, touting his skills and seeking patronage (Siti Marina 2024: 194-5, 387; Gallop and Porter 2012: 46). A collection of around twenty letters sent from pilgrims in Mecca to Kemas Haji Umar bin Kemas Haji Abdurrahman in Palembang between 1912 and 1932 has recently been digitised by DREAMSEA (DS 0005) and these are currently the subject of a study by Oman Fathurahman (2025).

As this small number of very recent publications illustrates, there are probably collections of 'letters from Mecca' held in all the far-flung locations from which pilgrims embarked on the Hajj pilgrimage, throughout the Malay archipelago.

A MALAY LETTER FROM MECCA TO BANGKOK

Presented in this article is a Malay letter from Mecca which is rather different from those mentioned above, in that it is not a communication between members of the Muslim community. This letter was sent in 1875 by a Malay named Syaikh Salih Daud in Mecca to the Deputy King of Siam, Bowon Wichaichan.

The letter is currently held in the National Archives of Thailand as NAT R5 B 4.1, fol. 4-5, and is part of a consolidated collection of papers relating to the deputy kings, originally held by the Department of the Royal Secretariat, which was transferred to the Department of Archival Sources, the predecessor institution to the National Archives of Thailand, upon its establishment in 1952. The collection NAT R5 B 4 was received as a closed corpus and has been preserved as such. It comprises six subgroups of documents of widely varying size, all written on Western-style paper.³

The first subgroup, to which the Malay letter belongs, is by far the largest, running to almost 280 folios. Its contents derive from the documentary estates of two Deputy Kings, Phra Pinklao (r. 1851–1866) and his son Bowon Wichaichan (r. 1868–1885), though the majority of the papers date from the latter tenure. The subgroup includes brief reports from Siamese consuls stationed in Singapore and Paris, official and private correspondence between the deputy kings, foreign dignitaries, and private individuals, royal letters from foreign heads of state, records of speeches, and invoices from Western firms for goods purchased from abroad. The internal arrangement of the documents appears to follow no consistent principle, conforming neither to strict chronological nor to thematic order. The Malay letter has been placed at the head of the file, an arrangement that likely reflects its singular and highly unusual character within the collection.

³ Traditional Thai manuscript materials fall under the separate purview of the manuscript section of the National Library of Thailand.

THE OFFICE OF THE 'DEPUTY KING' OF SIAM

According to Buddhist scripture and Siamese historiographical sources, the office of *maha uparat* or deputy king of Siam, colloquially referred to as *wang na*, was conceived above all as that of crown prince, its original purpose being the designation and careful preparation of a chosen successor. Preference was to be given to the eldest son of the reigning king or, failing a suitable candidate among his sons, to a royal brother.

Reflecting the gravity of the responsibilities that crown princes were ideally expected to assume, Siamese sources devote considerable attention to the question of education. Proficiency in all branches of warfare was considered essential, as was a solid grounding in the arts and sciences, including mathematics, architecture, jurisprudence, administration, military tactics, and poetry. More important still than these practical skills, however, were certain fundamental qualities of character, above all self-restraint, a disposition towards the common good, and political foresight. The sources are equally explicit about the defects that were to disqualify a prince from consideration, among them want of discipline and self-control, moral unfitness, and physical infirmity.

Under normal conditions, the final authority in the selection of a candidate was to rest with the reigning king alone. The ceremony of anointment was to be treated as a solemn occasion of state, in many respects comparable to a royal coronation. Beyond the ritual elements in the strict sense, comprising the recitation of Buddhist prayers, the ceremonial bathing of the prince, the presentation of insignia, and the pronouncement of blessings, the sources also envisage the crown prince's marriage to a suitable consort and his establishment in a separate royal residence. This household was expected to develop into the nucleus of the next generation's court, its administrative staff mirroring in composition, if not in scale, the hierarchy of the king's own palace.

Crown princes were thus to bear a dual responsibility. They were expected to manage their own establishment in exemplary fashion while at the same time supporting the reigning king across the full range of governmental functions, including the supervision of senior officials, the administration of justice, defence, social welfare, charitable patronage, and the oversight of public works. The underlying purpose of this arrangement was to ensure the gradual transmission of accumulated statecraft from one generation to the next, so that at the moment of succession a fully prepared prince would be ready to assume the throne without disruption. The prevailing expectation of the sources was that a prolonged period of shared governmental responsibility between king and crown prince would in due course yield a successor steeped in royal tradition, conscientious in the discharge of his duties, measured in conduct, disciplined in character, and cultivated in intellect (Dressler *forthcoming*).

During the late Ayutthaya period (1688–1767), the first signs of a gradual erosion of the distinction in status and function between the offices of king and crown prince had already become apparent. The establishment of the Chakri dynasty in 1782 gave formal expression to this tendency, as the appanage of the *maha uparat* was substantially increased and the ranks and numbers of his officials expanded accordingly. Between 1782 and 1885, the office was held by three brothers, one son, one uncle, and one cousin of reigning monarchs. Under conditions of recurrent political instability, the

ideal of a crown principship conceived as preparation for dynastic succession gradually gave way to an institution more closely resembling secondary kingship, and the original purpose of grooming a capable heir was displaced by considerations of political expediency. In consequence, the deputy kings came to occupy a prominent place not only in public administration but in the religious, social, and cultural life of the kingdom as well.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, the administrative apparatus of the secondary court expanded steadily in size, complexity, and military capacity, even as the political influence of the office itself declined sharply after the mid-century. The bureaucratic establishment presided over by the deputy king, which oversaw tens of thousands of dependants across the kingdom, continued to function even during prolonged vacancies of the secondary throne. This pervasive institutional presence gave rise, among Siamese subjects and foreign observers alike, to the perception that the Siamese state was in effect governed by two kings, and the apparently omnipresent and powerful deputy kingship became a recurrent point of reference in nineteenth-century accounts of the kingdom (Dressler *forthcoming*).

BOWON WICHAICHAN, LAST DEPUTY KING OF SIAM (r. 1868–1885)

Bowon Wichaichan was born on 6 April 1833 as the eldest son of Chaofa Chuthamani, who under the title Phra Pinklao was raised in 1851 to the office of Deputy King under Rama IV (King Mongkut, r. 1851–1868). Prince Bowon Wichaichan received a modern education that included instruction in the sciences and in the English language, which placed him well to serve as intermediary between his father and the foreign dignitaries and state guests received at court during the latter's tenure.

After the death of Rama IV on 1 October 1868, the throne council selected Princes Chulalongkorn and Bowon Wichaichan to succeed to their fathers' respective offices as king and deputy king of Siam. In the early weeks of the new reign, Bowon Wichaichan discharged ceremonial duties on behalf of the ailing king, who was still recovering from malaria. Consecrated on 25 November 1868, he devoted most of his time to overseeing the routine functioning of the deputy king's palace and administration, supervising the modernisation of his land and naval forces of around 2,000 men, and occasionally receiving foreign envoys. In addition to the reports on world affairs supplied by Siamese consuls in London, Paris, and Singapore, he also kept himself informed through international newspapers.

Although kept abreast of the day-to-day transactions of government, Bowon Wichaichan was not granted any real decision-making power by the powerful ministers and regents who governed on behalf of the minor King Chulalongkorn. Relations between king and deputy king, initially cordial, gradually deteriorated under the influence of malicious insinuations and growing mutual suspicion. Since the deputy king had been installed by the throne council rather than by the king himself, he came to be regarded as a potential rallying point for officials and nobles opposed to the reform programme championed by the circle of young idealists around King Chulalongkorn.

These tensions came to a head after a fire broke out in the royal palace on 28 December 1874, when Bowon Wichaichan did not appear in person to help extinguish the blaze. Rumours circulating among foreign residents held that the fire had been a stratagem to lure the deputy king from the safety of his palace, seize him, and force his abdication. When troops loyal to the king began to lay siege to the Front Palace, the residence of the deputy king, Bowon Wichaichan decided on 2 January 1875 to seek refuge and protection in the British consulate. After weeks of fruitless negotiations, the Governor of Singapore, Sir Andrew Clarke, succeeded in late February 1875 in brokering a face-saving settlement that preserved the deputy king's honours and income while dismantling his military establishment, leaving him only a lightly armed guard of 200 men. Humiliated but physically unharmed, Bowon Wichaichan was permitted to return to his palace on 25 February 1875. In the week that followed the resolution of the crisis, ministerial circulars were dispatched to governors and provincial administrations throughout the kingdom, informing them of the deputy king's desertion of his palace, his flight to the British consulate, and the ultimately peaceful settlement of the affair (Dressler *forthcoming*; Xie 1988). To ensure the widest possible dissemination of the official account of the events, the letters addressed to the southern provinces were accompanied by translations into Malay (NAT R5 K 11 69). It was in this period of unease and political isolation, not long after the crisis had subsided, that the Malay letter from Arabia must have reached Bangkok.

With the ministries and provincial administrations subsequently withholding portions of the revenue due to the deputy king's court, the institution declined in prestige and the palace itself began to fall into disrepair. During the 1880s, as King Chulalongkorn grew in confidence and stature as a statesman, relations between king and deputy king improved. Bowon Wichaichan was entrusted with supervising the maintenance and modernisation of Siam's coastal fortifications and was occasionally consulted on matters of state. The erosion of his personal authority nonetheless became increasingly apparent in the irregular conduct of his officials in the capital and the provinces, as well as in incidents involving members of his extended household that required the king's direct intervention. Bowon Wichaichan died on 28 August 1885. With the death of its last holder the institution of deputy kingship was immediately abolished.

MUSLIM COMMUNITIES IN SIAM, AND RELATIONS WITH THE DEPUTY KING

In the century that followed the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767, the area of present-day Bangkok developed, as the seat of the restored Siamese kingdom, into an extraordinarily diverse urban settlement. Muslim communities established a permanent presence in the new administrative centre from its very foundation, and successive waves of forced and voluntary migration throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries added further layers to the confessional and ethnic complexity of the metropolis.

It is well known that a Persian mercantile community settled in Siam during the Ayutthaya period, facilitating commerce between Ayutthaya and the Safavid Empire in the 17th century. While there had long been a Muslim Gujarati presence in Siam, the Bowring Treaty of 1855 – which gave Indians, as British subjects, the protection of consular jurisdiction – and the concurrent introduction of regular steamship services from Singapore stimulated a broader influx of migrants from the

subcontinent, including Muslims, who found employment in the local economy as shopkeepers, tailors, butchers, and in related trades (Van Roy 2017: 146-51).

Another significant Muslim minority in Siam were the Cham. The military defeats and prolonged decline of the Cham polities between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, in what is now Vietnam, dispersed significant numbers of Cham throughout Southeast Asia, and into Cambodia in particular. According to tradition, many Cham subsequently came to Ayutthaya either as war captives resettled from Cambodia or as voluntary migrants. Their recognised expertise in shipbuilding and naval warfare earned them the esteem of local elites and facilitated their incorporation into the Siamese administrative order, with communal leaders and their militias serving as sailors and even as oarsmen on royal barges during ceremonial processions. This close relationship with the court endured beyond the destruction of Ayutthaya in 1767, as their skills and loyalty continued to be valued under King Taksin (r. 1767–1782) and the subsequent rulers of the Chakri dynasty (including the deputy kings), who patronised the community and supported the construction and upkeep of its mosques (Van Roy 2017: 136-41).

No Muslim community, however, has been as numerically significant in Siam as the descendant communities of Malay origin. The southward reach of the Siamese polity along the Malay Peninsula, extending beyond Nakhon Si Thammarat, gave rise to a long history of tributary relations between Siam and the sultanates of the deep south, relations that were not always amicable. As documented from the late Ayutthaya period onward, thousands of Sunni Malay Muslims were captured and resettled in the Siamese heartland following repeated attempts by local rulers to assert independence from Siamese suzerainty and the punitive expeditions that ensued. Such forced transfers from the southern periphery to the political and economic centre continued throughout the first three reigns of the Chakri dynasty, bringing war captives and aristocratic hostages chiefly from Patani, but also from Kedah and, to a lesser extent, Kelantan, most of whom were settled as rice cultivators. As noted above, this period also saw the migration of many in the Patani scholarly community to Mecca. This pattern of migration shifted in the mid-nineteenth century, when the development and expansion of the Siamese economy generated new income opportunities and incentives for voluntary movement from the south to Bangkok (Van Roy 2017: 151-60).

The office of the Deputy King was also involved in liaising with the Muslim communities. Although Bowon Wichaichan fulfilled the expected obligations of a princely patron of Buddhism, he did not confine his favour to Buddhist institutions and dignitaries alone. The limited evidence available suggests that he also maintained respectful relations with representatives of other religious traditions, including Christian and Muslim dignitaries.

Within Siam proper, subjects of the crown were generally required to register for the purpose of taxation (*corvée* labour) under a designated overseer and to be tattooed as a mark of their affiliation. Certain categories of persons could, however, be granted exemption from this obligation, among them nobles, officials, royal pages, and royal wet nurses. That comparable exemptions were also extended to respected members of Muslim communities is suggested by the registration records from Bowon Wichaichan's tenure. Of the 25,693 individuals who received protection documents between 1869 and 1885, some 2,740 were Muslim dignitaries identified as *to toan hayi* (NAT R5 Km 8 2).

Beyond the boundaries of Siam, tributary missions from the Malay sultanates arriving in Bangkok with the customary golden and silver trees for presentation to the King of Siam were also received in audience and entertained at the deputy king's palace. Visitors from Satun, Patani, Saiburi, Raman, Yala, Yaring, Nongchik, Rangae, Kedah, Terengganu, Kelantan, and Perlis, who regularly offered to the deputy king white cloth, carpets, and occasionally gold dust, were granted cash gifts in return (NLT MRS R5 1244 2). The same pattern of reciprocal courtesy is visible for example in the reception accorded to Bowon Wichaichan during his final journey to the south in 1885, when he visited Patani, Kelantan, and Terengganu and was warmly received (Brailey 1997: 173).

Although to date the archival papers of the deputy kings have not yielded information on the conduct of the Hajj pilgrimage from Siam, it is presumably within the context of relations between the office of the Deputy King and the Muslim community that lines of communication were established between Bowon Wichaichan and Syaikh Salih Daud in Mecca.

SYAIKH SALIH DAUD'S LETTER TO THE DEPUTY KING

In his letter to the Deputy King, whom he addresses throughout as *Raja Muda*, Syaikh Salih Daud describes himself as *datuk yang kedua negeri Mekah*, 'the second elder in Mecca'. The context of this epithet is not clear, although it could refer to a (perceived or claimed) position of authority amongst those in Mecca with some degree of allegiance to the Deputy King of Siam.

The first half of the letter is taken up with conventional compliments (*puji-pujan*) for the Deputy King, before Syaikh Salih proceeds to acknowledge the safe arrival of a shipment of fragrant agila wood (*gaharu*, also known as agarwood) for which he promises to try to obtain an appropriate price (*pendapat patut*). Syaikh Salih also lists the gifts he is sending the Bowon Wichaichan, which comprise typical Mecca souvenirs such as the oil of attar of roses (*minyak 'atar*), rose water (*air mawar*) and raisins (*zabib*), as well as deluxe items such as ornamental glasses decorated with gold floral patterns, and asks the Deputy King to let him know of any special requests for Mecca products.

Syaikh Salih further requests cloth to construct a tent for pilgrims to shelter at Arafat, one of the essential stages of the Hajj pilgrimage. It is particularly interesting to note that Syaikh Salih emphasises that the Deputy King would 'gain great merit' (*dapatlah kebajikan beberapa banyak*) for this generous deed, thus presenting the act of assisting Muslim pilgrims in the fulfilment of their religious duty in recognizably Buddhist terms of 'merit making'.

The paper wrapper of the letter is inscribed with the title of the recipient, 'Humble greetings to His Highness the Deputy King of the state of Siam', repeated three times. Although the full original size of the paper wrapper of the letter cannot be seen, it appears to have been cut with triangular sides which were probably joined or fastened together to form an envelope.

Nothing more is known about the writer of the letter, Syaikh Salih Daud, and this name is not referenced in Francis Bradley's study of Patani circles in Mecca (Bradley 2015). The letter is written in good, standard, Malay, and conforms well to the norms and protocols of official Malay

letter-writing. It seems to be devoid of regional dialectical inflections which might have given a clue as to Syaikh Salih Daud's place of origin in the Malay archipelago; for example, there are none of the elements of Kelantan dialect and Patani linguistic inflections (*panduka* for *paduka*, *lenbai* for *lebai*) noted in some of the Malay letters in the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia collection (Siti Marina 2024: 196). It should also be noted that none of the surviving papers from Bowon Wichaichan's estate held in the collection NAT R5 B 4 has thus far shed light on the circumstances in which Syaikh Salih's letter was received in 1875.

SYAIKH SALIH DAUD'S SEAL

At first sight, Syaikh Salih's seal is a typical Malay Islamic seal, inscribed just with his name *Syaikh Salih Daud* and a very simple five-dotted floral motif. It is stamped in what appears to be lampblack (as far as can be judged from the black-and-white reproduction from microfilm), which is the traditional Malay sealing medium. And yet there are aspects of this seal which are quite unusual in the context of a Malay letter sent from Mecca.

The use of a seal in the Malay world was generally an honour only conferred by royal favour, and usually accompanied the bestowing by a ruler of a titled position within a Muslim kingdom. The official title of the sealholder, rather than a personal name, was therefore the most important and most commonly encountered element of an inscription on a Malay seal (Gallop 2019: 6, 37). The only significant exception to this usage of seals in the Malay world was seals used by the religious fraternity of Muslim scholars who had travelled to the Holy Cities of the Haramayn, which for the whole period under consideration – since the defeat of the Mamluks in 1517 – had been under Ottoman control. In the Ottoman realm, the use of seals was standard throughout all strata of society, and indeed the possession of a seal was necessary for the conduct of any official business. Thus most Malay pilgrims and scholars would have had a seal made on arrival in the Hijaz. These seals are generally recognizably of Ottoman manufacture, as reflected in their size, shape and calligraphy, and were nearly always stamped in black ink, the standard sealing medium throughout most of the Islamic world (Gallop and Porter 2012: 48, 138-9).

Syaikh Salih Daud's seal is recognizably of Malay, rather than Ottoman, workmanship, as reflected in the standard of calligraphy. However, it is quite unusual to find a Malay seal bearing just a personal name and without any other information at all such as a toponym, date or religious phrase; indeed, out of a corpus of over two thousand Malay seals, this is the only known seal containing just a name with the title *Syaikh*, and without any other inscriptional element (cf. Gallop 2019). Furthermore, as mentioned above, most seals used by Malays in the Arabian peninsula would have been stamped in black ink rather than the lampblack traditionally used in Southeast Asia. Another point to note is that in most Malay territories subject to Siamese jurisdiction, seals were stamped in the traditional Thai sealing medium of red ink rather than lampblack, and thus all Malay seals of Kedah and Perlis are stamped in red ink. Syaikh Salih Daud's use of lampblack as a sealing medium is therefore not only unusual by the standards of usage of Islamic seals within Mecca, but also suggests that that he did not hold any official office subject to the Deputy King of Siam, but was more likely a freelance Malay broker or agent based in Mecca.

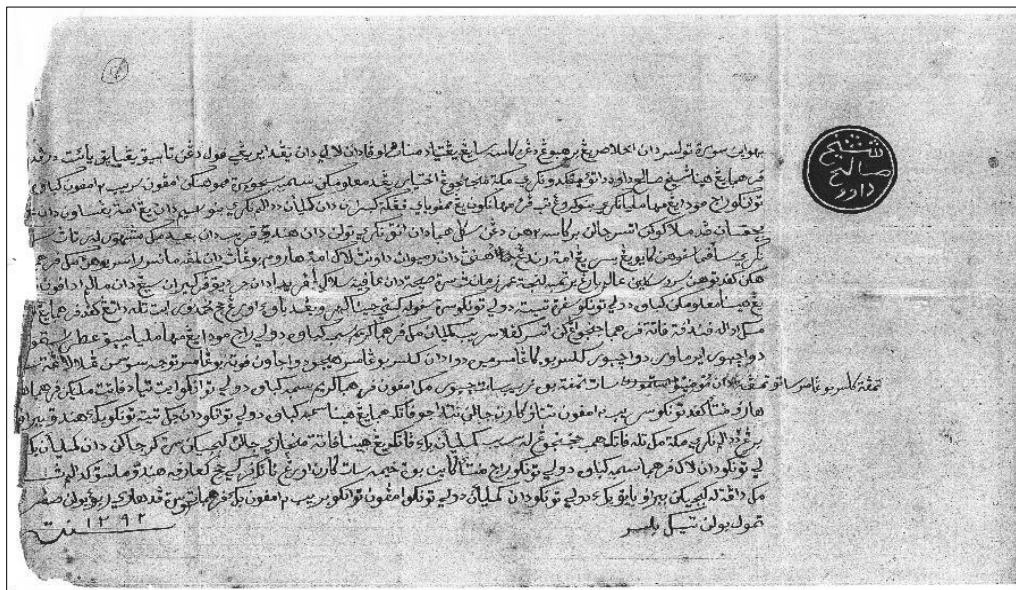
CONCLUDING REMARKS

Syaikh Salih Daud's Malay letter, sent from Mecca in 1875 to Bowon Wichaichan, Deputy King of Siam, adds to the small corpus of correspondence between the Muslim Holy Cities in Arabia and Southeast Asia which is increasingly attracting attention from scholars. While there is great variety in the contents of the published letters to date, most of the letters were exchanged within Muslim communities. This letter stands apart through being sent by a Malay Muslim personage in Mecca, Syaikh Salih Daud, to the Buddhist Deputy King of Siam. From the contents of this letter, it is clear that the relationship of goodwill that existed between the Siamese monarchy and Muslim dignitaries – be they subjects of the Siamese crown or of a Malay vassal ruler – enabled the participation of a senior member of the Siamese royal family in the economic exchange between Southeast Asia and the Arabian peninsula. While such transactions were regularly conducted both by Muslim pilgrims engaged on the Hajj or by Malays settled in Mecca, as access to the Holy City was restricted to Muslims, such trading activities could only be undertaken by non-Muslims through the good offices of a local agent such as Syaikh Salih Daud. At the same time, the Malay Muslim agent was able to leverage this relationship with the Buddhist Deputy King of Siam to enhance the welfare of Muslims performing the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca.

This letter thus invites a revision of the prevailing model of Hajj-related correspondence as a closed, exclusively Muslim network of communication, showing instead that the economic interests of a Buddhist Southeast Asian court could be accommodated within its broader framework, and hinting at similar cross-confessional entanglements that may yet be uncovered elsewhere.

Figure 1

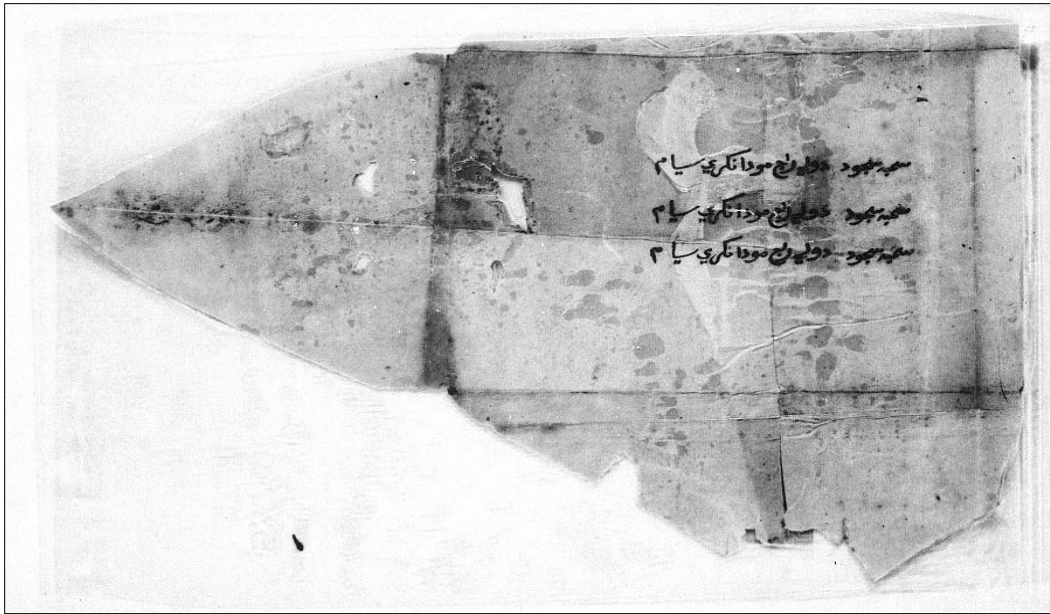
Letter from Syaikh Salih Daud in Mecca to the Deputy King of Siam in Bangkok, Safar 1292 (21 March 1875)



Source. Bangkok, National Archives of Thailand [NAT R5 B 4.1 fol. 5].

Figure 2

Paper Wrapper of the Letter to the Deputy King of Siam, Inscribed Sembah Sujud Duli Raja Muda Negeri Siam (Repeated Three Times)



Source. Bangkok, National Archives of Thailand [NAT R5 B 4.1 fol. 4].

Letter from Syaikh Salih Daud in Mecca to Bowon Wichaichan, Deputy King (*Raja Muda*) of Siam, in Bangkok (*Krung Thep Pra Maha Nakhon*), 13 Safar 1292 (21 March 1875)

National Archives of Thailand (Bangkok), Documents of the Fifth Reign, Miscellaneous, 4. Krom phra ratchawang bowon, 1. Miscellanea of the Krom Phra Ratchawang Bowon, folios 4-5.⁴ [NAT R5 B 4.1 fol. 4-5]

Editorial note: The extreme left hand edge of the paper is damaged, and as a result on some lines the final letter(s) or word may be illegible or missing, and these are footnoted as necessary and the ends of lines have been indicated with '/'. There are also a few idiosyncrasies in the placing of dots above and below letters; these have only been annotated when the meaning is not otherwise clear.

Seal: *Syaikh Salih Daud*

Malay text:

Bahwa ini surat tulus dan ikhlas yang berhubung dengan kasih sayang yang tiada menaruh lupa dan lalai dan yang diiringi pula dengan tabik yang banyak iaitu daripada / perhamba yang hina Syaikh Salih Daud datuk yang kedua negeri Mekah menjunjung ikhtiar yang dimaklumkan sembah

⁴ For the full archival reference in Thai, see the list of Archival sources.

sujud serta memohonkan ampun seribu2 ampun ke bawah [Duli]⁵ / Tuanku Raja Muda yang maha mulia negeri benua Krung Teb Pra Maha Nakon yang mempunyai pangkat kebesaran dan kemuliaan di dalam negeri benua Siam dan yang amat bangsawan dan ar[iff] / bijaksana pada melakukan atas jalan berkasi2han dengan segala hamba dan anak negeri taulan dan handai karib dan baid maka masyhurlah ratanya s[eluruh?] / negeri seupama sephohon kayu yang besar yang amat rendang⁶ ja dahannya dan rimbuan⁷ daunnya lagi amat harum bunganya dan limpah manis rasa buahnya, maka perhamba ... / -hkan kepada Tuhan seru sekalian alam barang bertambah lanjut umur zamannya serta sihat dan aflat selagi a[da] peridaran cerdik⁸ perkiraan siang dan malam.

Adapun p[erhamba] / yang hina maklumkan ke bawah Duli Tuanku seperti titah Duli Tuanku serta sepuluh kati⁹ Cina gaharu yang dibawa orang Haji Muhammad Nur itu telah datang kepada perhamba yang h[ina] / maka adalah pendapat patut perhamba junjuangkan¹⁰ atas kepala seribu kemuliaan. Maka perhamba kirim sembah ke bawah Duli Raja Muda yang maha mulia minyak atar istimewa / dua cebur,¹¹ air mawar dua cebur, gelas [bunga]¹² mas merah dua dan gelas bunga mas hijau dua, cawan putih bunga mas tujuh susun ngelalangi¹³? s[atua?] / tempat gelas bunga mas satu,¹⁴ tempat dan muw minyak¹⁵ istimewa satu, tempat buah zabib satu cebur, maka ampun perhamba kirim sembah ke bawah Duli Tuanku itu tiada patut melainkan perhamba {h}¹⁶ / harap minta kepada Tuanku seribu2 ampun, tetapi karena jalan tanda¹⁷ jua patik hamba yang hina sembah ke bawah Duli Tuanku. Dan jika titah Tuanku bagi hendak beberapa / barang di dalam negeri Mekah, maka telah patik hamba junjunglah seribu kemuliaan bagi patik yang hina patut mencari jalan kebajikan serta kerjakan dan kemuliaan bagi [Du]/li Tuanku. Dan lagi perhamba sembah ke bawah Duli Tuanku Raja minta kain buat khemah satu karena orang naik pergi haj ke Arafat hendak masuk ke dalamnya, / maka dapatlah kebajikan beberapa banyak bagi Duli Tuanku dan kemuliaan Duli Tuanku, ampun Tuanku beribu2 ampun bagi perhamba.

Tersurat pada hari Rabu bulan Safar tamawul¹⁸ bulan tiga belas, sanat 1292.

⁵ Although no trace of these letters can be seen due to the fold in the paper, it is very likely that the honorific *Duli* was written at the end of this line.

⁶ *Rendang*, leafiness, giving shade (Wilkinson 1985: 343).

⁷ r-m-[b]-w-a-n, *ba* with two dots, i.e. *rimbun*.

⁸ j-r-d-y-q; the standard epistolary phrase is *selagi ada peridaran cakrawala*, 'so long as the firmament revolves'.

⁹ Appears to be spelled k-s-t-y but should doubtless be read k-t-y, *kati*.

¹⁰ j-n-j-w-a-ng-k-n, i.e. *junjungkan*.

¹¹ c-b-w-r; *mencebur* refers to the plunging of something into water or liquid; in this context it may mean a container for a standard sized scoop or measure of liquid.

¹² Spelt b-w-g-a-ng-a, but by comparison with the next phrase probably the letters g-a were a mistake.

¹³ ng-l-a-l-a-ng-t

¹⁴ Added in the right-hand margin.

¹⁵ m-w m-n-y-q, مُؤْمِنِي ; the meaning of *muw* is not clear.

¹⁶ Most likely the repeated first letter of *harap* on the next line.

¹⁷ The spacing of the dots appears to form the letters n-t-d-a.

¹⁸ t-m-w-l; Arabic, *tamauwul*, to become rich.

Envelope:

Sembah sujud Duli Raja Muda negeri Siam (repeated three times)

English translation:

This is a sincere and honest letter, born from affection that knows neither neglect nor forgetfulness, accompanied by bountiful greetings, from your lowly servant Syaikh Salid Daud, the second in command in Mecca, judiciously conveying his respectful obeisance whilst begging a thousand pardons to Your Highness the Deputy King of the land of Krung Teb Pra Maha Nakon, who is of exalted and honoured rank in the state of Siam, whose nobility and wise counsel is manifest in his benevolent treatment of all his subjects and people, and friends and acquaintances, both near and far, and whose fame has thus spread across the whole land like a great tree with shady branches and thick leaves and fragrant blossoms and sweet-tasting fruits, and so your servant [beseeches] the Lord of the whole world to grant you long life and a great age, and to bless you with good and robust health, for as long as the [firmament] revolves and day follows night.

Wherefore your lowly servant informs Your Highness that Your Highness's message and the ten Chinese *kati* of agila wood brought by Haji Muhammad Nur's people have reached your lowly servant, for which your servant, with a thousand respects, will endeavour to obtain the appropriate profit. And your servant sends in obeisance to Your Highness the Deputy King two containers of special oil of essence of roses, two containers of rose water, two red and gold flowered glasses and two green and gold flowered glasses, a white cup decorated with a seven-layered gold flower, one receptacle for the glasses with gold flowers, one receptacle and *muw* of oil, and one container with receptacles for raisins. All of these your servant sends in obeisance to Your Highness though they are not as they should be, for which your servant begs a thousand pardons, but this was the way of your lowly servant's submission to Your Highness. And if Your Highness wishes to order any goods from Mecca, then your servant would regard it as a thousand honours for your lowly servant to perform a meritorious service for Your Highness. And furthermore your servant begs Your Highness for cloth to construct a tent to shelter the pilgrims who make the journey to Arafat, for which Your Highness would gain great merit and honour, and again your servant begs a thousand pardons.

Written on Wednesday in the month of Safar [the enriching?], the 13th, the year 1292.

Envelope:

Humble greetings to His Highness the Deputy King of the state of Siam (repeated three times)

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All authors contributed to the introduction, literature review, methodology, analysis, findings, conclusion, and references of this study.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors reported no conflicts of interest for this work and declare no potential conflict of interest concerning the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

ETHICS AND DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

This study was conducted in accordance with all applicable research ethics requirements. Data supporting this research are available in this paper.

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