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Agency: How Manuscripts Affect and Create Social Realities

Edited by Michael Kohs and Sabine Kienitz

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Cover

A 'letter from Heaven', ID no. I (33 J) 176/1963, Berlin, Museum of European Cultures (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Museum Europäischer Kulturen). Written in Ernstroda near Gotha, Thuringia, and dated 1776. The original sheet of paper was folded once, making four pages. Here we can see p. 1 with the title 'Himmels=Brief, welchen, Gott selber geschrieben' ('Letter from Heaven, which God Himself has written') and page 4. The written bifolium was then folded four times. Two words were visible on the two outer sides resulting from this: 'Gottes Brief' ('God's letter'), shown on p. 4. The upper part of the letter has been cropped and part of the illumination has been cut off. Photography: Christian Krug.

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Article

Paper Wheels with Strings Used for Divination from Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula

Farouk Yahya | London

Abstract

This paper will explore the concept of agency as it relates to a type of divinatory paper wheel found in Sumatra and the Malay peninsula. This technical device consists of a round piece of paper which is divided into a number of sectors, each of which contains a prediction with a piece of string attached to its edge. The user chooses a sector at random by placing or waving the folded paper on or over his head and pulling at one of the strings. The sector obtained will reveal the answer to an afore-formulated question. These manuscripts are therefore not objects containing texts to be read and internalised, but as divinatory tools that are activated by the human head, have the agency of influencing people to make decisions and carry out certain actions.

Introduction

The focus of this paper is on a type of divinatory technique found in Sumatra and the Malay peninsula. This technique uses a circular piece of paper which is pasted onto a piece of cloth. The paper is divided into a number of sectors, forming a wheel. Each sector contains a prognostication in Malay written in Jawi script, and has a piece of string attached to its edge. The user chooses a sector at random by placing or waving the folded paper on or over his head and then pulling at one of the strings. The sector chosen will then reveal the answer to the query.

This form of divination belongs to a range of practices usually referred to as sortilege or the casting of lots. Such techniques work on the principle of ‘the interpretation of results produced by chance’,¹ and include practices such as throwing dice, bones or sticks, or opening a book at random to find the prediction. Divinatory techniques of sortilege are usually referred to as *faal* in Malay and *phay* in Acehnese (both spelled in the Jawi alphabet as *f-a-’-l*), both terms derived from the Arabic word *fa’l* (‘omens’). As the paper

wheels contain texts that deliver the prognostication, they can be categorised belonging to a form of sortilege known as ‘bibliomancy’, i.e. divination using texts or books.

The procedure

So far, two types of divinatory paper wheels have been identified, hereafter referred to as Type A and Type B.

Type A

The first type (Type A) is more widespread and appears to be particularly popular in the region of Aceh in northern Sumatra, Indonesia, with extant copies dating to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Ten examples are listed in Appendix 1 (Figs 1–5), five of which have been personally examined by the present author. However, there are further copies in other collections that have yet to be explored.

It seems that these paper wheels are referred to locally as *faal/phay*, as this is how they are described in the colophons of a numbers of manuscripts (PNRI ML 233, Blang Mangki, Aceh, Sumatra, by 1898; and the Syik Jah Cot Baroh manuscript, Aceh, nineteenth century). Similarly, in his 1938 book *Atjeh*, the Dutch journalist and former soldier H. C. Zentgraaf refers to them as *soerat phaj* (*surat phay*; *surat* means ‘thing written’) and *soerat koetika* (*surat kutika*; *kutika* being a general term for divinatory charts/calendars involving time).²

The paper wheels are around 31–34 cm in diameter and are typically pasted onto cloth. The cloth backing helps to preserve the paper, especially if it is often folded to be used (the act of folding can cause the paper to tear at the creases).³

¹ Savage-Smith 2004, xxxiii.

² Zentgraaff 1938, 259, illustrated on p. 251; I am grateful to Mirjam Shatanawi for informing me of this publication. On the use of these terms in Aceh, see Snouck Hurgronje 1906, vol. 1, 298, n. 1 and 3, vol. 2, 41.

³ Many thanks to Francesca Leoni for this insight. In manuscripts which have been worm-eaten (such as TM-674-801a), the structure of the wheel is still intact.



Fig. 1a: Front.



Fig. 1b: Back.



Fig. 1c: Folded together.

Fig. 1: A divinatory paper wheel with strings attached (Type A), Aceh, Sumatra, by 1911. Leiden University Library, Ms. Cod. Or. 8505(1).



Fig. 2a: Front.



Fig. 2c: Folded together.



Fig. 2b: Back.

Fig. 2: A divinatorial paper wheel with strings attached (Type A), Aceh, Sumatra, nineteenth–early twentieth century. Leiden University Library, Ms. Cod. Or. 8506(a).

The five cloth examples that were examined are all made of cotton. Some are plain, such as LUL Cod. Or. 8505(1) (Aceh, by 1911) and TM-674-802 (Seulimeum, Aceh, by 1931), which are simply white (now yellowed; Figs 1b and 5b), while TM-674-801a (Aceh Utara, by 1912) is a plain, dark-red cloth (Fig. 3a). Others are decorated – LUL Cod. Or. 8506(a) (Aceh, nineteenth–early twentieth century) and TM-674-801b (Aceh Utara, by 1912) are backed by indigo-and-white batik textiles with vegetal and floral motifs (Figs 2b and 4b).⁴ The strings attached to the edges of the wheels are typically white, but the ones for LUL Cod. Or. 8505(1) are red.

Each wheel is divided into 16 sectors, and the edges of each sector are typically rounded or pointed, making the shape of the manuscript reminiscent of a flower or star when it is open.⁵ In order for it to be used, the manuscript is folded into a ‘fan’ shape (Figs 1c, 2c).⁶ The wheels themselves do not provide any instructions on how they should be employed, but Zentgraaf provides a brief explanation of how they work. According to him, the folded paper is placed on a person’s forehead, and the bearer then pulls a string at random to reveal the prediction:

Tenslotte is er de ‘soerat phaj’, of ‘soerat koetika’, die bij ondernemingen van betekenissen wordt geraadpleegd. Het is een cirkelvormig papier, in zestien sectoren verdeeld; uit elk hiervan steekt een draadje. Het gesloten papier wordt, biddend en sterk denkend aan het gemaakte plan, tegen het voorhoofd gehouden waarna men een willekeurig draadje tussen de vingers neemt, het wichelpapier opent en leest wat geschreven staat op den sector waaraan de draad vast zit.

Op de 16 sectoren staan verschillende voorspellingen, goede en slechte [...].⁷

⁴ The batik of the Leiden manuscript is fairly well made (as can be seen by the skills employed in executing the complex patterns), although the colour range is limited. Many thanks to Aimee Payton for this observation.

⁵ A similar shape could be seen in an Arabic moral treatise, *La budd* (‘Thou shalt’), by Sayyid ‘Uthman ibn ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Aqil ibn Yahya al-‘Alawi of Batavia, Java (1822–1914). The text is placed within a 14-sector diagram on a single sheet which is not folded; lithographed in Batavia, dated 20 Jumādā I 1319 AH / 4 September 1901 AD, Leiden University Library, Plano 53 F 1:3; see Vrolijk and Leeuwen 2014, 137. I am grateful to Michael Feener for this reference.

⁶ This is the case for LUL Cod. Or. 8505(1), LUL Cod. Or. 8506(a) and PNRI ML 233, for instance; see Kumar and McGlynn 1996, 89, fig. 105; also see Zentgraaf 1938, 251.

⁷ Zentgraaf 1938, 259.

Finally, there is the ‘soerat phaj’, or ‘soerat koetika’, which is consulted in matters of importance. It is a circular piece of paper divided into sixteen sectors; each of them has a thread. One folds the paper, prays and thinks hard about the plan, and holds the paper against the forehead, after which one takes a random thread between the fingers, opens the piece of paper and reads what is written on the threaded sector.

There are different predictions in the 16 sectors, [both] good and bad [...].⁸

Similarly, in 1882, the Dutch explorer A. L. van Hasselt described this form of divinatory technique being used in Lubuk Tarok, Central Sumatra. He referred to it as ‘koetikō’ and also provided an explanation of how it was used:

Te Loebowq-Taròq zag ik er een in den vorm van een papieren cirkel, die in 16 sectoren gevouwen was en diende om na te gaan of de dag al dan niet gunstig was te achten. Daartoe staat op iederen sector geschreven of het een goede of slechte dag is, en hangt er aan den omtrek van elk deel een koordje. De onderzoeker vat met de rechterhand de toegevouwen koetikō bij de punt en zwaait haar driemaal boven het hoofd; daarna en terwijl de koetikō op dezelfde plaats blijft, zoekt zijn linkerhand een van de koordjes dat hem als uitgangspunt dient om voort te tellen tot zeven toe. Op den sector waaraan de zevende draad is vastgemaakt, staat te lezen of de dag al dan niet gunstig voor hem zal zijn.⁹

In Loebowq-Taròq [Lubuk Tarok] I saw one in the shape of a [paper] circle, which was folded into 16 sectors and served to determine whether the day was or was not considered favourable. To this end, it is written on every sector whether it is a good or a bad day, and a short string is attached to the circumference of each part. The person applying it takes hold of the folded *koetiko* at the tip using his right hand and waves it over his head three times; and then, while the *koetiko* remains in the same place, he searches for one of the strings with his left hand to serve as a starting point to count to seven from there.

⁸ I am grateful to Mirjam Shatanawi for her help with this translation.

⁹ Hasselt 1882, 88.



Fig. 3a: Front.



Fig. 3b: Back.

Fig. 3: A divinator paper wheel with strings attached (Type A), Aceh Utara, Sumatra, by 1912. Amsterdam, Tropenmuseum, Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, TM-674-801a.

On the sector to which the seventh string is fixed, you can see whether or not the day will be favourable for him.¹⁰

Each of the 16 sectors of the paper wheel contains an augury. Each augury is associated with a prophet or angel of Islam, and the related predictions are good, bad or a mixture of the two (see Table 1). The predictions are usually constructed in the form of conditional statements, i.e. ‘If (*jika*) P, then Q’. The human activities mentioned in the predictions include travelling, sailing, studying and marriage as well as the prognosis of illness (see Appendix 2 for the full text and an English translation). A method to counteract the effects of bad predictions would sometimes be offered, too. These include giving alms to the poor, being patient and undergoing the *berlimau*¹¹ bathing ceremony.¹²

Table 1: List of angels and prophets with associated outcomes.

Prophet/angel	Outcome
Idrīs (Enoch)	Good
Nūḥ (Noah)	Good
Ibrāhīm (Abraham)	Good
Ismā‘īl (Ishmael)	Good
Ya‘qūb (Jacob)	Good
Yūsuf (Joseph)	Mixed
Mūsā (Moses)	Good
Khidr	Bad
Dāwūd (David)	Bad
Yaḥyā (John)	Good
‘Īsā (Jesus)	Mixed
Muḥammad	Good
Jibrā‘īl (Gabriel)	Good
Mikā‘īl (Michael)	Good
Isrāfīl	Good
‘Izrā‘īl (Azrael)	Bad

Thus under the augury relating to the Prophet Ismā‘īl, for instance, a person will be protected by God from all danger, obtain huge profits and be safe while sailing. In contrast, under the augury relating to the Prophet Dāwūd, sailing will

end in disaster, illnesses will take a while to recover from, and a marriage partner will turn out to be a bad choice. Some of the associations between these prophets and angels associated with good or bad fortune are obvious. For example, the augury relating to ‘Izrā‘īl, the angel of death, is understandably bad. However, the associations are not so clear with others. The fortune relating to Prophet Dāwūd is also very bad, for instance, and it is difficult to ascertain the reasons behind this.

There is some variation in the sequences of prophets and angels amongst the various wheels, which could be due to attempts to further ensure a random prediction (see Table 2). Nevertheless, there are also some similarities between the examples that have been examined. The sequence in LUL Cod. Or. 8506(a) (Aceh, nineteenth–early twentieth century) (Fig. 2a), for example, is exactly the same as in TM-674-801b (Aceh Utara, by 1912) (Fig. 4a), although the prognostic texts in the latter are shorter. In addition, PNRI ML 233 (Blang Mangki, Aceh, by 1898) has almost exactly the same sequence as TM-674-801a (Aceh Utara, by 1912), except the sections on ‘Īsā and Mūsā are transposed, and the prognostic texts in both copies are broadly in line with each other. The list in TM-674-802 (Seulimeum, by 1931) (Fig. 5a) is the same as in TM-674-801a (Fig. 3a), but in reverse order. All of these similarities suggest that the sequencing of the prophets/angels was not deemed to be a major concern in the randomisation of the procedure.

It is perhaps significant that the Dutch took three of the manuscripts as booty from leaders of the Acehnese religious resistance in the early twentieth century: LUL Cod. Or. 8505(1) (Aceh, by 1911) from Teungku di Mata Ie (d. 1917) and TM-674-801a and TM-674-801b from his son-in-law Teungku di Barat (d. 1912).¹³ Firstly, this demonstrates that the wheels were portable and carried around by their users. Secondly, the owners of these three manuscripts were prominent ulamas (religious scholars). As occult practices such as divination are sometimes perceived by some conservative Muslims as being prohibited (*haram*) in Islam, the use of divinatory paper wheels by these ulamas indicates that this practice was accepted by the religious milieu (at least in Aceh). Indeed, as will be discussed later, this divinatory device is perceived as ultimately relying on God’s wisdom and knowledge in helping people make decisions, and as such its use could be reconciled with the belief in God and His power.

¹⁰ I am grateful to Jan van der Putten for his help with this translation.

¹¹ A ritual bath of water mixed with lime, used to ‘wash off’ any bad luck.

¹² Cf. Farhad and Bağcı 2009, 31–34 for similar texts in the Persian *fālnāma* (‘books of omens’).

¹³ Both individuals are mentioned briefly in Veer 1969, 264. I am grateful to Michael Feener for this pointer.



Fig. 4a: Front.



Fig. 4b: Back.

Fig. 4: A divinator paper wheel with strings attached (Type A), Aceh Utara, Sumatra, by 1912. Amsterdam, Tropenmuseum, Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, TM-674-801b.

Type B

Currently, the second type of divinatory paper wheel (Type B) is only represented by a single manuscript from the sultanate of Terengganu on the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia and is dateable to the early twentieth century. It is now part of a collection housed by the National Library of Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur (PNM MS 4084) (see Appendix 1; Fig. 6) and is in the shape of a decagon or 10-sided polygon (the sides reflect the division of the wheel into 10 sectors) and has a diameter of 33 cm. The paper has been pasted onto a piece of yellow cloth of the same shape.

This version of the paper wheel works slightly differently to the previous one. On the cloth side there are instructions on how the wheel (referred to here as *faal*) is supposed to be used (Fig. 6c). It says:

Ini faal jikalau seorang berhajat apa-apa. Baca Fatihah sekali hadiah kepada Rasulullah shallā allāh 'alaihi wa-sallam dan kita pohon kepada Allah subhānahu wa- ta'ālā samada dikabulkan atau tidaknya. Lihat dalam faal ini. Peraturan melihat: ambil ini faal, letak atas kepala, jangan lihat. Pegang mana-mana satu talinya, nescaya engkau dapat apa-apa kenyataan.

This *fa'l* (augury) is for anyone who wishes for anything. Read the *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* once as a gift to the Messenger of God (blessings and peace be upon him) and we ask God (the Glorified and Exalted) if it will be granted or otherwise. Look in this *fa'l*. The rules for looking: take this *fa'l*, put it on your head, don't look [at it yet]. Hold any of the strings and you will surely get what you are seeking.

The paper is divided into 10 sectors, each of which is numbered between 1 and 10 and contains a prediction, and each prediction is linked to a Qur'anic verse. In almost every case, the Qur'anic verse chosen makes a reference to the number of the sector. Thus, in the ninth sector, for example, the Qur'anic verse refers to the nine miraculous signs of Moses for the Pharaoh (17:101). The text reads as follows:

Dan jika terpegang tempat yang kesembilan inilah dalilnya. Firman Allah Taala: 'wa-la-qad ātainā Mūsā tis'a āyātīn bayyinātīn'. Adalah pekerjaan yang engkau niatkan itu tiadalah kebajikan di dalamnya dan jahat perbuatan

olehmu barang yang engkau kehendaki tetapi adalah perbuatan di dalamnya kemudian mendapat kebajikan dan berjual dan membeli kuranglah baik, insya-Allah Taala. Wallāhu a'lam.

And if you hold the ninth section, this is the prediction. God the Exalted says: 'To Moses We did give Nine Clear Signs'.¹⁴ The work that you wish to do does not have any goodness in it and will be bad if you carry it out. However, the actions will bring benefits later. And selling and buying will not be so good, God the Exalted willing. And God knows best.

The origin of the device

It is difficult to trace the origin, development and transmission of this form of divination. The hot and humid climate of the region, coupled with the perishable nature of the material, means that the majority of South East Asian manuscripts that existed prior to the late eighteenth century have not survived. The paper wheels themselves are undated, but most likely date to the nineteenth or early twentieth century, as is the case for most Malay manuscripts. In addition, the texts contained in the wheels do not have any information on the person(s) who devised this divinatory technique or the author of the texts.

Type A of the divinatory paper wheel has some very close parallels with another form of divinatory technique found in South East Asia, however. A number of Malay divination manuscripts describe the use of a wooden or paper dice inscribed with the Arabic letters *hā'* and *wāw* (a physical example of such an object is yet to be found, though). The dice is thrown four times to generate a combination of four letters. Each sequence of four letters is represented by an Islamic prophet or angel and predicts a good or bad outcome.¹⁵ The list of prophets/angels and their predictions in this dice divination technique is exactly the same as those found in Type A of the divinatory paper wheel, indicating a connection between the two. Indeed, the sequence of prophets/angels in TM-674-802 (Seulimeum, by 1931) is identical to that for dice divination listed in a manuscript from Pontianak, western Borneo, dated 1303 AH/1885–86 CE (PNM MS 3225, fols 9^v–11^v). The prognostic texts in both manuscripts are also very similar.

¹⁴ Translation of the Qur'an based on 'Alī 1999, 270.

¹⁵ Farouk 2016, 140.

Table 2: The different sequences of prophets and angels in some of the wheels investigated (read in an anti-clockwise direction).

LUL Cod. Or. 8505(1)	LUL Cod. Or. 8506(a)	PNRI ML 233	TM-674-801a	TM-674-801b	TM-674-802
Muḥammad	Muḥammad	Muḥammad	Muḥammad	Muḥammad	Muḥammad
Ibrāhīm	Khiḍr	Jibrā'īl	Jibrā'īl	Khiḍr	Ya'qūb
Yūsuf	'Izrā'īl	Isrāfīl	Isrāfīl	'Izrā'īl	Idrīs
Mūsā	Jibrā'īl	Mikā'īl	Mikā'īl	Jibrā'īl	Nūḥ
Yahyā	Isrāfīl	'Izrā'īl	'Izrā'īl	Isrāfīl	Khiḍr
Dāwūd	Mikā'īl	'Īsā	Mūsā	Mikā'īl	Yahyā
Yūnus	'Īsā	Mūsā	'Īsā	'Īsā	Yūsuf
Idrīs	Dāwūd	Dāwūd	Dāwūd	Dāwūd	Ismā'īl
Ya'qūb	Ismā'īl	Ibrāhīm	Ibrāhīm	Ismā'īl	Ibrāhīm
Khiḍr	Ibrāhīm	Ismā'īl	Ismā'īl	Ibrāhīm	Dāwūd
Jibrā'īl	Yūsuf	Yūsuf	Yūsuf	Yūsuf	'Īsā
Isrāfīl	Mūsā	Yahyā	Yahyā	Mūsā	Mūsā
'Īsā	Yahyā	Khiḍr	Khiḍr	Yahyā	'Izrā'īl
Ismā'īl	Idrīs	Nūḥ	Nūḥ	Nūḥ	Mikā'īl
Mikā'īl	Nūḥ	Idrīs	Idrīs	Idrīs	Isrāfīl
'Izrā'īl	Ya'qūb	Ya'qūb	Ya'qūb	Ya'qūb	Jibrā'īl

This dice divination technique may have originated in Iran where there is a similar practice, but one that employs different Arabic letters on the dice (*alif, bā', jīm and dāl*) and which is attributed to the sixth Shi'i imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (702/3–765 CE). Here the dice is thrown three times and the resulting combinations are consulted in a manual, which provides the predictions.¹⁶ A dice of this type and its associated manual have been located in Cape Town, South Africa, where it once belonged to an eighteenth-century Islamic scholar named Imam Abdullah Kadi Abdus Salam, also known as Tuan Guru. He was originally a prince from Tidore, Indonesia before being exiled to the Cape in 1780. It is unclear whether he obtained the dice and manual before he arrived in South Africa, but if he did, then it provides physical evidence of the use of dice divination in South East Asia.¹⁷

Thus, although it seems likely that the practice of dice divination was transmitted to South East Asia from the Persian world (possibly via India), it is, however, difficult to say the same about the use of the divinatory paper wheel. No Persian examples of the wheels have been found so far (or, indeed, examples from any other parts of the Islamic world), which

implies that the use of such instruments for divination may have been a South East Asian innovation.

The significance of the human head

A particular characteristic of the procedure is placing the wheel above or on the user's head in order to find the prediction. It could even be argued that the divinatory procedure is activated by the human head. This suggests a particular connection between the wheel – in terms of it as a physical object and/or the text it contains – and the head. Indeed, the bibliomantic practice of placing texts or books on a person's head for divination is also found in other cultures, including those in the Western world. In the Christian tradition, religious texts were often used for divination, such as in the *Sortes Bibliae* ('Lots of the Bible') whereby a person would open the Bible at random and the first passage seen would provide the guidance they needed. In another practice, during the consecration of a bishop, the Book of Gospels is placed on the bishop's head, and the first verse in the open book is believed to provide an indication of how the bishop's episcopacy would be.¹⁸ Thus it is said that during the consecration of Thomas Becket, the twelfth-century Archbishop of Canterbury who was murdered while in office, the passage encountered during the ritual was

¹⁶ Donaldson 1938, 194.

¹⁷ Davids 1980, 18 with a photograph on p. 19. I am grateful to Michael Feener for this reference.

¹⁸ Brande 1842, 1132, s.v. 'Sortes Homericae, Virgilianae, Sanctorum, &c.'; Baring-Gould 1896, 258–259; Elukin 1993, 138–139, 152–153.



Fig. 5a: Front.



Fig. 5b: Back.

Fig. 5: A divinatorial paper wheel with strings attached (Type A), Seulimeum, Aceh, Sumatra, by 1931. Amsterdam, Tropenmuseum, Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, TM-674-802.

from St Matthew in which Christ cursed a fig tree and caused it to wither.¹⁹ Elsewhere, the Psalter is used for divination in Russia: the bibliomantic procedure is preceded by rotating the book three times above a person's head.²⁰

One issue that needs to be addressed is the significance of the human head in these rituals. In the bishop consecration ceremony, the bibliomantic element appears to have been a later addition to the practice of placing the Book of Gospels on the head (or the neck or shoulders) of the bishop. This ritual – known as *impositio evangeliorum* – was to impress the responsibilities of his office upon the bishop and the audience, and the use of the holy text to gauge the nature of his term was a natural extension of this practice.²¹

With regard to the divinatorial paper wheel, however, the reason for placing it on the user's head may have been a practical one – so that the person concerned cannot see which string he is pulling. Nevertheless, there might be a deeper meaning behind this act. In Islamic societies, the head

is the highest-ranking part of the human body and represents high status.²² Thus the act of prostration signifies submission to a higher authority. Part of the prayer ritual involves prostration to God with the forehead on the ground. Wearing things on the head could likewise be a form of prostration and humility. In Turkey, for example, the wearing of caps with the image of the Prophet Muhammad's sandal print is considered a form of devotion to him.²³ However, whether placing the divinatorial paper wheel on or above a person's head represents a form of 'prostration' to God's power in revealing the Unseen requires further investigation.

The significance of the head would also have resonated with local ancient South East Asian beliefs, as exemplified by the practice of headhunting in various parts of the region such as Sumatra, Borneo, the Philippines and Myanmar (Burma). There have been many interpretations about the purposes of these headhunting expeditions, such as maintaining a cosmological ideology, enhancing fertility and for territorial expansion.²⁴ One reason the head was chosen as opposed to other parts of the human body (at least in Borneo) was because it contains the face, which represents 'the individual as a social person'.²⁵ In Malay society, the sanctity of the head reverberates through many aspects of culture and customs; indeed, it is a major taboo for a person to touch another person's head.²⁶ Similarly, the Portuguese traveller Duarte Barbosa (d. 1521) reported that the Javanese 'wear nothing on their heads, saying that nothing ought to be over the head; the greatest insult among them is to put the hand on any man's head'.²⁷ Again, however, connections between notions of the sanctity and symbolism of the human head among South East Asian societies with the divinatorial paper wheel still need further research.

Paper wheels as objects with agency

Another issue to be considered is the power of the paper wheel and its role as an agent in people's lives. Although paper in itself does not have any magical properties in particular, the

²² Khuri 2001, 17–18.

²³ Christiane Gruber, personal communication in 2016. On the Prophet's sandalprint, see Gruber 2009.

²⁴ For a general overview of headhunting, see Hoskins 1996; Russell n.d.

²⁵ McKinley 1976, 118.

²⁶ Skeat 1900, 43–45.

²⁷ Barbosa 2002, vol. 2, 192–193.

¹⁹ Guy 2012, 147.

²⁰ Ryan 1997, 50.

²¹ Elukin 1993, 138–139.

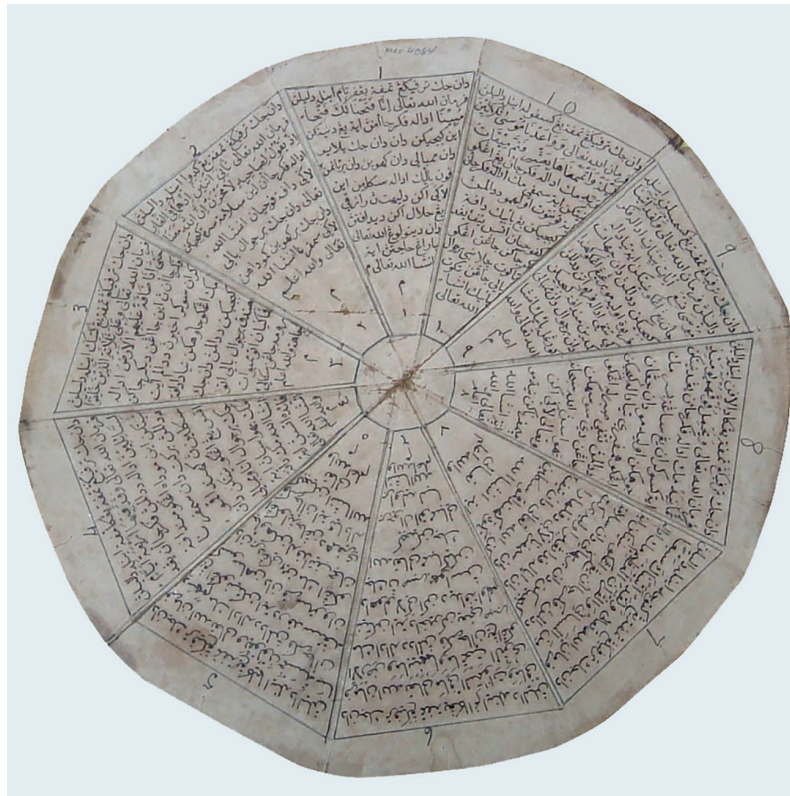


Fig. 6a: Front.



Fig. 6b: Back.

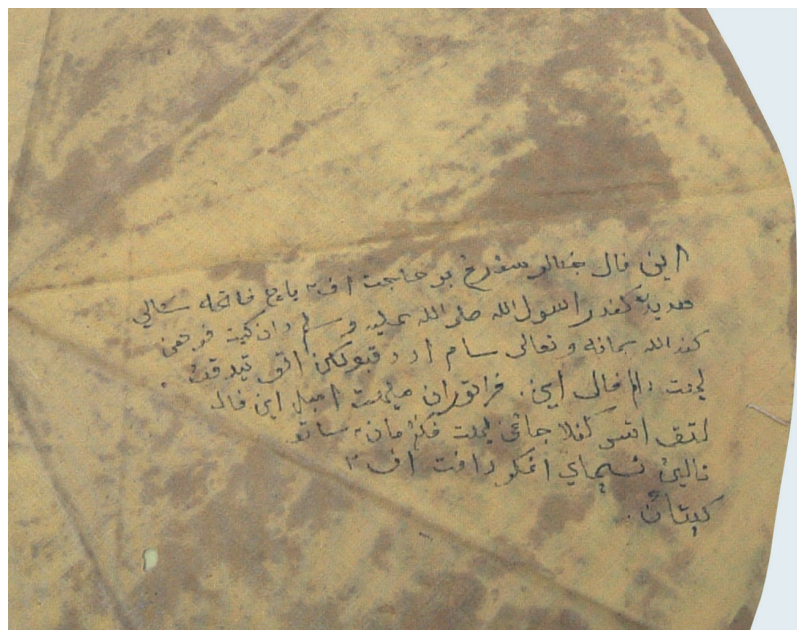


Fig. 6c: Instructions.

Fig. 6: A divinatorial paper wheel with strings attached (Type B), Terengganu, Peninsular Malaysia, early twentieth century. Kuala Lumpur, Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia, MS 4084.

texts written on it can transform the material into an object of power, as in the case of paper talismans (this is in contrast to objects such as gemstones, which can have their own power, and any texts inscribed on them serve to enhance this power). By giving instructions and generating various predictions, the paper wheels have the ‘power’ to cause a person to carry out (or not carry out) certain actions and make decisions, and therefore influence people’s behaviour. In addition, it could be said that this agency is activated by the human head. We can perhaps compare these paper wheels to similar objects found elsewhere, even in literature. In the Harry Potter novels, for instance, new students who arrive at Hogwarts School have to undergo a ceremony in which a Sorting Hat is placed on the student’s head. The Hat then delves into the student’s soul and mind and pronounces which house the student should reside in.²⁸ Here it would seem that it is the Hat that is making the decisions, but in the case of the divinatorial paper wheels, the situation is not as clear-cut. As they contain texts containing names of holy figures and sacred verses, we may ask whether they are indeed the ones who are making pronouncements for human beings to follow, or are merely instruments to communicate the pronouncements of other entities.

In order to answer this, we may apply Alfred Gell’s theoretical framework espoused in his book *Art and Agency* as well as Warren Boutcher’s application of Gell’s theory to literary artefacts, and apply this to the use of divinatorial paper wheels.²⁹ Within Gell’s framework, the paper wheel is considered an ‘index’, which is created by the ‘artist’ (i.e. the person who made copies of it). The user of the wheel (the ‘recipient’) is causally affected by it (as a ‘patient’) when he/she carries out the instructions given in the manuscript on how to perform the technique (such as that given in PNM MS 4084), and later when he/she decides to carry out or not to carry out actions based on the prediction given by the wheel. However, the wheel itself

is only a ‘secondary agent’, with the agency residing with the anonymous author of the text (who is another ‘artist’) and God (who is the ‘prototype’).

The agency of the author affects the user of the wheel through his words. In their study of pictorial auguries in the Persian and Ottoman worlds, Massumeh Farhad and Serpil Bağcı have observed that techniques in which the predictions are delivered orally to the client by a diviner allow the diviner to provide his own interpretations and embellishments, and that these predictions are personalised for the client. In contrast, written auguries or *fālnāmas* (‘books of omens’) do not require an intermediary, and the texts are ‘fixed’.³⁰ This highlights an important difference between divinatorial techniques that are delivered orally and in written form. In the former, the agency of the original composer/author of the technique is supplemented by the diviner’s (who adds his own interpretations and embellishments) and affects only one person, i.e. the client for whom it has been personalised. In the latter, the written form, (including devices such as the divinatorial paper wheels), the agency of the original composer/author affects the user directly and can reach multiple people in different physical locations and periods.

God’s agency is manifest in the random selection of the string as well as the predictions delivered by the wheel. The latter is particularly pronounced in Type B of the paper wheel,

²⁹ See Gell 1998 and Boutcher 2013. For a similar discussion on the application of Gell’s theory to another Malay divinatorial technique known as the *Faal Qur’an*, see Farouk 2017.

³⁰ Farhad and Bağcı 2009, 28, 34.

²⁸ Rowling 1998, 85–91.

which employs Qur'anic verses. As the Qur'an is believed to be the Word of God in Islam, the predictions delivered by this type of wheel can be said to be divine knowledge from God. As for Type A of the paper wheel and the related method of dice divination, the auguries are linked to Islamic prophets and angels. In the Islamic world, these figures are often invoked in talismans and divinatory techniques.³¹ They act as God's intercessors and help to disclose God's Will, which aids people in making the right decisions. Their role in delivering messages from God can be seen clearly with regard to the angel Gabriel, who delivered God's Revelations to the Prophet Muhammad. Thus the predictions provided by this type of paper wheel can also be said to ultimately emanate from God.

Such divine assurances would have certainly provided comfort to those using the wheels, or indeed any other kind of lot-casting technique. In his study of biblical bibliomancy or *sortes* in medieval Europe, Jonathan Elukin noted that the use of sacred books would have provided divine approval or legitimacy in matters such as decision-making, resolving disputes, providing an excuse for not undertaking a particular action (such as avoiding an unwanted marriage proposal), endorsing the act of warfare and bestowing courage upon fighters to seek martyrdom³² – all of which could equally be applied to the use of similar procedures in South East Asia. Indeed, the divine sanction of warfare and martyrdom is particularly apt in the case of divinatory paper wheels – as mentioned earlier, three of the examples investigated were associated with Acehese religious leaders involved in resistance fighting against the Dutch in the early twentieth century.

Elukin, however, points out that, although *sortes* can relieve the burden of making a difficult decision or gaining group consensus by deferring to God, often a decision or consensus has already been made prior to carrying out the divinatory procedure, so the result of the *sortes* is essentially to provide sacred approval of the desired outcome.³³ We may assume that this was also true in South East Asia, at least in some cases, although historical and anthropological reports on the use of bibliomancy and other lot-casting procedures have yet to be analysed in detail. As such, it could be argued that, although the principles underlying these techniques

rely on God's agency in providing a divine resolution, there is also a level of agency on the part of the users that must also be considered, which is manifest in the innate personal struggles or group negotiations that took place prior to the divination being carried out. Alternatively, this agency could be more direct – as Elukin points out, these divinatory procedures could be manipulated to ensure a desired outcome or used to intimidate others or impose a particular decision on them.³⁴

While the divinatory procedure defers to God's power, there are also some indications that the paper wheels themselves were regarded as sacred objects. As mentioned earlier, in South East Asian societies, the sanctity of the human head means that it is not permissible to put one's hand or other objects on a person's head. Yet the fact that the divinatory paper wheels are placed on or above the head for divination indicates that they are revered enough to circumvent this taboo.

Furthermore, the cloth backing of the paper may also indicate the value of the wheels. An obvious example of how the choice of cloth can demonstrate the sacred nature of the object can be seen in PNM MS 4084. This manuscript is said to have been obtained from a member of the royal family of Terengganu, and evidence of its royal provenance can be seen in the fact that it has been pasted onto yellow cloth (Fig. 6b). In Malay society, yellow is a colour that is strictly reserved for royalty, and yellow cloth is often used to wrap or cover royal regalia.³⁵ Items of royal regalia are thought to have great power in themselves. For instance, it is believed that anyone who touches royal musical ensembles (known as *nobat*) will be afflicted by illness or misfortune. The colour yellow also has further associations with the supernatural world – yellow cloth is often used to wrap talismans, for instance, and shrines of saints who are believed to have great spiritual and supernatural power are also decorated in yellow.³⁶

The choice of white cloth for LUL Cod. Or. 8505(1) (Fig. 1b) and TM-674-802 (Fig. 5b) could have been for economic reasons, as white cloth was possibly cheaper and more easily attainable. Yet white also has sacred, mystical and spiritual associations in South East Asia. In Malay society, white 'has been adopted by Malay medicine-men

³¹ Canaan 2004, 137–139, 143–145.

³² Elukin 1993, 142–153.

³³ Elukin 1993, 143–144.

³⁴ Elukin 1993, 144, 152–153.

³⁵ Skeat 1900, 33–34, 51.

³⁶ For instance see <<http://belogmystery.blogspot.co.uk/2013/02/sejarah-kehidupan-tokku-pulau-manis.html>> (last accessed 30 October 2022).

as the colour most likely to conciliate the spirits and demons with whom they have to deal',³⁷ which might explain the use of white cloth to back divinatory paper wheels.

Conclusion

Malay divinatory paper wheels provide important insights into South East Asian manuscript and divinatory traditions. Their unusual format attests to the diversity of manuscripts in the region, while their function provides evidence for the use of divination in practice. Additionally, the paper wheels offer a valuable opportunity to understand the issues relating to manuscripts and agency, such as how they act as agents, the significance of actions that need to be carried out for them to be activated (in this case by placing them on the human head), and the exact identity of the agent, i.e. whether it is the manuscripts, the texts or the divine entities that are bestowing the predictions. This paper has attempted to address some of these issues, but further examples of such wheels could help to shed more light on their usage and significance in South East Asia.

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³⁷ Skeat 1900, 51.

APPENDIX 1: A PRELIMINARY LIST OF KNOWN MANUSCRIPTS

This is a list of selected examples of divinatory paper wheels that are known to the author (both Type A and Type B). The descriptions include the place and date of production, the type of material used, measurements and bibliographical references. Those wheels that are only documented from photographs or publications and that I have not inspected personally are labelled as ‘not seen’.

Abbreviations of institutions

LUL	Leiden University Library
PNM	Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur
PNRI	Perpustakaan Nasional Republik Indonesia, Jakarta
TM	Tropenmuseum, Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Amsterdam

Type A:

	Manuscript	Place and Date of Production	Type of Material and Measurements	Bibliographical References
1	LUL Cod. Or. 8505(1) (Fig. 1)	Aceh, Sumatra, by 1911.	Circular sheet of lined paper, divided into 16 sections with pointed ends to which red strings have been attached, pasted onto plain white cotton cloth. Diameter: 34 cm. One of a group of manuscripts taken as booty ‘in the hiding-place of Teungku di Mata Ie, along the river Krueng Ramaihsan (near Lhök Sukōn), by a patrol under Lieut. Le Maire in August 1911; donated by H. T. Damsté in 1954’. ³⁸	Iskandar 1999, 552–553.
2	LUL Cod. Or. 8506(a) (Fig. 2)	Aceh, Sumatra, nineteenth–early twentieth century.	Circular sheet of lined paper, divided into 16 sections with pointed ends to which strings have been attached, pasted onto indigo batik cotton cloth with white (now yellowed) vegetal and floral motifs. Diameter: 34 cm. Donated by H. T. Damsté in 1954.	Iskandar 1999, 554.

³⁸ Iskandar 1999, 552–553.

	Manuscript	Place and Date of Production	Type of Material and Measurements	Bibliographical References
3	PNRI ML 233 [not seen]	Gampong Blang Mangki, Aceh, Sumatra, by 1898.	Circular sheet of paper, divided into 16 sections to which strings have been attached. Diameter: 34 cm. There is a colophon on the back which says that it belonged to Teungku Nyak Ra'i from Gampong Blang Mangki. Found by Lt. Caval. Rauh in Cot Plieng, Aceh, on 22 July 1898.	Bataviaasch Genootschap 1900, 41; Ronkel 1909, 448, no. DCCLXXXVIII; Kumar and McGlynn 1996, 89, fig. 105; ³⁹ Behrend 1998, 22, fig. 3, 285; Farouk 2016, 146, fig. 148.
4	TM-674-801a (Fig. 3)	Aceh Utara, Sumatra, by 1912.	Circular sheet of paper, divided into 16 sections with rounded ends to which strings have been attached, pasted onto plain dark red cotton cloth. Diameter: 31 cm. One of a group of objects seized by a Dutch army officer, Henri Behrens, from Teungku di Barat, a leader of the Acehnese religious resistance, when he was killed by the Dutch in 1912; purchased from Friedrich Stammeshaus in 1931. ⁴⁰	Shatanawi 2014, 42, fig. 25.
5	TM-674-801b (Fig. 4)	Aceh Utara, Sumatra, by 1912.	Circular sheet of paper, divided into 16 sections with rounded ends to which strings have been attached, pasted onto white (now yellowed) batik cotton cloth with indigo vegetal motifs. Diameter: 31 cm. One of a group of objects seized by a Dutch army officer, Henri Behrens, from Teungku di Barat, a leader of the Acehnese religious resistance, when he was killed by the Dutch in 1912; purchased from Friedrich Stammeshaus in 1931.	Shatanawi 2014, 42, fig. 25.
6	TM-674-802 (Fig. 5)	Seulimeum, Aceh, Sumatra, by 1931.	Circular sheet of paper, divided into 16 sections with pointed ends to which strings have been attached, pasted onto plain white (now yellowed) cotton cloth. Diameter: 32 cm. Purchased from Friedrich Stammeshaus in 1931.	Shatanawi 2014, 42, fig. 25.

³⁹ The manuscript is erroneously described as being a letter here.

⁴⁰ I am grateful to Mirjam Shatanawi for the information on the Tropenmuseum objects.

	Manuscript	Place and Date of Production	Type of Material and Measurements	Bibliographical References
7	Private collection belonging to Syik Jah Cot Baroh of Pidie, Aceh, Sumatra ⁴¹ [not seen]	Aceh, Sumatra, nineteenth century.	Circular sheet of paper, divided into 16 sections to which strings have been attached. There is a colophon on the reverse side, which says that it was copied and owned by Nyak Umar Cut Amut ibn Muhammad ibn Yakub.	It has been digitised by the British Library Endangered Archives Programme under the number EAP229/4/1. < https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP229-4-1 > (last accessed on 30 October 2022)
8	Private collection of Teungku Ainal Mardhiah of Aceh, Sumatra [not seen] ⁴²	Aceh, Sumatra, nineteenth century.	Circular sheet of paper [incomplete], divided into 16 sections (one of which is missing) to which strings have been attached.	It has been digitised by the British Library Endangered Archives Programme under the number EAP329/10/11 < https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP329-10-11 > (last accessed on 30 October 2022)
9	Private collection [not seen] ⁴³	Pidie, Aceh, Sumatra, nineteenth century.	Circular sheet of paper [incomplete], divided into 16 sections (only six sections of which are left). In each sector the paper extends into a rather large protrusion to which the string might have been attached previously.	
10	Present location unknown [not seen] ⁴⁴	Pidie, Aceh, Sumatra, nineteenth century.	Circular sheet of paper, divided into 16 sections to which strings have been attached.	Zentgraaff 1938, 251, 259–260.

⁴¹ Many thanks to Annabel Gallop for informing me about this manuscript.

⁴² Many thanks to Annabel Gallop for informing me about this manuscript.

⁴³ Many thanks to Hermansyah for informing me about this manuscript.

⁴⁴ Many thanks to Mirjam Shatanawi for informing me about this manuscript.

Type B:

1	PNM MS 4084 (Fig. 6)	Terengganu, Malaysia, early twentieth century.	Circular sheet of paper, divided into 10 sections to which strings have been attached, pasted onto plain yellow cotton cloth. Diameter: 33 cm. Said to have been owned by a member of the Terengganu royal family. ⁴⁵ No colophon, but according to Muhammad Pauzi Abdul Latif, it was copied by Haji Abdul Rahman ibn Encik Long. ⁴⁶	Muhammad Pauzi 2007, 5, no. i; Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia 2011, 111, also illustrated on the front cover; Farouk 2016, 146, fig. 147, 290, cat. 83.
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APPENDIX 2: TRANSLITERATION AND TRANSLATION OF THE MANUSCRIPT TM-674-802 (TYPE A)

This is a transliteration and translation of the text of the divinatory paper wheel (Type A) taken from the manuscript TM-674-802 (Seulimeum, by 1931). Square brackets [] indicate additions or explanations that I have added, based upon texts in other manuscripts, including the one on dice divination in PNM MS 3225.⁴⁷

Transliteration

Bab ini faal Nabi Muhammad shallā Allāh ‘alaihi wa-sallam. Maka faal ini amat baik, [da]n segala pekerjaannya beroleh sempurna, lagi ditolongkan Allah Taala pada segala mara dan bahaya. Lagi beroleh berkat berlabah, barang ke mana ia perginya selamat, lagi diperoleh kebajikan dianugerahkan akan Allah Taala. Lagi rahmat pun banyak bertambah-tambah daripada Allah Taala beroleh sempurnanya. Wallāhu a‘lam, āmin.

Bab faal ini Nabi Yaakub ‘alaihi al-salām. Faal ini maha baik pada segala pekerjaan[nya]. Jika pergi-pergian selamat, dan jika pergi beroleh sukacita, dan pada rezeki pun beroleh sentiasa bertambah-tambah dianugerahkan Allah Taala, dan barang ke ma[na] ia pergi selamat. Jika sakit segera sembuh dan usyianya pun dilanjutkan umurnya oleh Allah Taala. Jika berlayar berolehlah yang besarnya. Wallāhu a‘lam, āmin.

Bab ini faal Nabi Idris ‘alaihi al-salām. Faal ini maha baik.

Diperolehnya dapat kesukaannya dunia dan akhirat. Dan orang pun kasih kepadanya. Dan barang diperbuatnya segera menjadi dan luput daripada mara dan bahaya. Akan tetapi adalah bercintaannya daripada bersahabat atau bencana orang; tiadalah mengapa. Dan arta pun ba[nyak] diperolehnya dan dapat sentiasa kesukaannya. Wallāhu a‘lam, āmin.

Bab ini faal Nabi Nuh ‘alaihi al-salām. Faal ini maha baik, lagi dipertemukan oleh Allah Taala dengan kekasihnya. Dan barang dicitanya diperolehnya. Jika menuntut ilmu pun dianugerahkan Allah Taala dengan dia. Jika sakit segera sembuh. Dan kasih orang dekat dia. Lagi arta pun banyak diperolehnya. Dan [ham]pir kepadanya raja-raja dan segeralah beroleh besar[?] martabat dia. Wallāhu a‘lam, āmin.

Bab ini faal Nabi Khidr ‘alaihi al-salām. Faal ini maha jahat. Maka barang pekerjaan diperbuat tiada menjadi lagi dukacita. Dan bencana [i.e. benci] orang pun banyak dan o[rang] dengki pun banyak dan fitnah pun banyak. Dan jika berlayar binasa. Maka hendaklah mandi berlimau dan memberi sedekah akan fakir miskin kadar tujuh ha[ri] supaya lepaslah ia daripada bencana itu p[er]a-y-b-2. Wallāhu a‘lam, āmin.

Bab ini faal Nabi Yahya ‘alaihi al-salām. Faal ini maha baik lagi beroleh kesukaan pun baik kepadanya dan rezekinya dimudahkan Allah Taala. Dan rahsia pun dibukakan Allah akan baginya. Dan jika berlayar segera datang kepadanya. Dan jika sakit segera sembuh. Dan [jika] ada bencana pun tiada mengapa. Akan menambah berkat akan kepadanya pun selamat, insya-Allah Taala. Wallāhu a‘lam, āmin.

⁴⁵ Muhammad Pauzi Abdul Latif 2007, 5.

⁴⁶ Muhammad Pauzi Abdul Latif, personal communication on 7 July 2012.

⁴⁷ Pontianak 1885–1886.

[Bab] ini Nabi Yusuf ‘alaihi al-salām. Maka faal ini seperti pahit rupanya, kepada kamu sekalian lagi bercinta-cintaannya. Maka akan tetapi [le]kas kamu dapat yang sukacita dan yang sentiasa.⁴⁸ Dan barang pekerjaan menjadi dan sampai maksudnya. Dan jika [ber]layar selamat, insya-Allah Taala. Wallāhu a‘lam, āmin.

Bab ini faal Nabi Ismail ‘alaihi al-salām. Faal ini maha baik diperolehnya lagi dia dipelihara Allah daripada segala mara dan bahaya. Dan beroleh laba besar. Dapatnya melihat segala⁴⁹ yang baik. Dan jika berlayar selamat, akan tetapi adalah sedikit yang kesakitan, akan tetapi tiada mengapa nescaya dikembalikan Allah Taala jua dia selamat dan dapat sejahtera yang sempurnanya, insya-Allah Taala. Wallāhu a‘lam, āmin.

Bab ini faal Nabi Ibrahim ‘alaihi al-salām. Faal ini amat baik lagi diperoleh kebajikan dan dipelihara Allah Taala daripada sekalian [ba]la. Dapat melihat kekasihnya yang baik. Dan jika berlayar selamat akan tetapi adalah untungya yang kesakitan sedikit, tetapi tiada mengapa nescaya dikembalikan oleh Allah Taala jua dianya, dapat selamatnya daripada mara dan bahaya, insya-Allah Taala. Wallāhu a‘lam, āmin.

Bab ini faal Nabi Daud ‘alaihi al-salām. Faal ini maha jahat. Maka barang pekerjaannya jahat dan tiada menjadi. Jika ber[layar] binasa atau akan gundah hati. Da[n jika] sakit lambat sembuh, dan seteru[nya] banyak. Jika beristeri itu [jahat]. Dan jika perempuan bersuami dapat orang yang jahat. Maka hendaklah memberi se[dekah] supaya menolak bala [ania]ya daripada keja[hatan], insya-Allah Taala. Wallāhu a‘lam, āmin.

Bab ini faal Nabi Isa ‘alaihi al-salām. Fa[al] ini maha baik lagi beroleh kesukaannya, dan beroleh arta yang halal daripada dunia akhirat. Dan ilmu pun diperolehnya. Akan tetapi jika berlayar lambat kembali. Jika sakit lambat sembuh. Jika sahaya lari lambat dapat. Jika berjual beli beroleh [laba] lagi sukacita. Jika beristeri pun baik. Jika ada fitnah orang tiada mengapanya, insya-Allah Taala selamatnya. Wallāhu a‘lam, āmin.

Bab ini faal Nabi Musa ‘alaihi al-salām. Faal ini maha baik, akan bertemu dengan kekasihnya, dan keluarga yang dari jauh akan datang dan beroleh sukacita yang amat baik. Jika sakit lekas sembuh. Dan jika kenda [i.e. kena] bencana tiada mengapa, Allah subhānahu wa-ta‘ālā yang memelihara dia. Jika berlayar itu bersakit datang, hendaklah sabar supaya beroleh kebajikan akan dia itu, insya-Allah Taala sejahteranya dan selamat. Wallāhu a‘lam, āmin.

[Bab] ini faal Izrail ‘alaihi al-salām. Faal [ini] amat jahat. Jika pergi-pergian binasa [atau] kerugian. Dan jika berniagaannya tiada [membe]ri manfaat, lagi benci orang pun [banyak]. Maka hendaklah sabar daripadanya, dimenangkan dia, dan menolak [bala] barang tiga hari dan [man]di berlimaunya supaya memelihara oleh Allah Taala akan dia, [in]sya-Allah Taala selamatnya. Wallāhu a‘lam, āmin.

Bab ini faal Mikail ‘alaihi al-salām. Faal ini amat baik. Pada rezekinya dimudahkan oleh Allah Taala, akan tetapi adalah sedikit yang tiada baik akan tetapi tiada mengapa. Bermula barang kerjanya menjadi dan barang yang dimaksudnya diperolehnya. Akan tetapi cedera sedikit. Jika berlayar tiada banyak laba akan tetapi selamat jua. Jika laki-laki [me]lihat faal ini beroleh isteri yang baik. Wallāhu a‘lam, āmin.

Bab ini faal Israfil ‘alaihi al-salām. Faal ini amat baik baginya. Jika sakit lekas [sem]buh. Dan jika berlayar sejahtera lagi dengan [su]kacita yang baik diperolehnya, akan tetapi adalah kesakitan sedikit akan tetapi tiada menga[pa], Allah Taala yang memelihara akan dia dapat sejahtera, dan yang sempurnanya pada pergi dan datang selamat pada mara dan bahaya. Wallāhu a‘lam, āmin.

Bab ini faal Jibrail ‘alaihi al-salām. Faal ini sangat baik lagi banyak faedahnya. Pertama, pada rezekinya dimudahkan Allah Taala. Dan jika menuntut ilmu segera diperoleh dianugerahkan Allah Taala daripada sehari kemudian sehari bertambah-tambah kebajikan dan k-w-a-s-n h-m-a-nya[?].⁵⁰ Dan segala orang yang dengki dan khianat akan dia pun dijauhkan Allah Taala daripadanya, lagi beroleh kesukaannya. Wallāhu a‘lam, āmin.

⁴⁸ PNM MS 3225, fol. 10^v says *sentosa*.

⁴⁹ PNM MS 3225, fol. 10^v says *kekasihnya*.

⁵⁰ PNM MS 3225, fol. 11^v says *kesukaan*.

Translation

This chapter is on the augury of the Prophet Muḥammad, blessings and peace be upon him. This augury is very good, and any undertakings will turn out perfectly. God the Exalted will also provide help against all danger. The augury seeker will receive bountiful blessings, wherever he⁵¹ goes he will be safe, and he will have goodness bestowed upon him by God the Exalted. And bountiful blessings will be received from God the Exalted. And God knows best. Amen.

This chapter is on the augury of the Prophet Ya'qūb, peace be upon him. This augury is very good for all undertakings. If the person goes travelling, he will be safe, and whenever he travels, he will obtain happiness, and his life will be bountiful, bestowed upon him by God the Exalted, and anywhere he goes he will be safe. If he is ill, the patient will recover quickly and his life will be extended by God the Exalted. If he goes sailing, he will get [rich]. And God knows best. Amen.

This chapter is on the augury of the Prophet Idrīs, peace be upon him. This augury is very good. The person will obtain whatever he wants in this world and the hereafter. And people will love him. And anything he does will be successful and he will always be safe from danger. There will be sorrow from friendship or other people's misfortune, however; it is alright. And he will receive a great deal of wealth and will also be happy. And God knows best. Amen.

This chapter is on the augury of the Prophet Nūḥ, peace be upon him. This augury is very good, and God the Exalted will ensure the person meets the one he loves. And whatever he wishes for will be obtained. If he seeks knowledge, this will also be bestowed upon him by God the Exalted. If he is ill, he will be cured quickly. And other people will love him. And he will obtain a great deal of wealth. And he will be close to royalty and will soon receive a high status. And God knows best. Amen.

This chapter is on the augury of the Prophet Khidr, peace be upon him. This augury is very bad. Any undertaking will fail and cause disappointment. And there will be many people

who hate him, and many who are envious and many who will create a lot of slander. And if he goes sailing, it will end in calamity. He must therefore undergo the *berlimau* bathing ceremony and give alms to the poor for seven days to escape his bad luck. And God knows best. Amen.

This chapter is on the augury of the Prophet Yaḥyā, peace be upon him. This augury is very good. The person will receive much happiness and his livelihood will be made easy by God the Exalted. And secrets will be revealed to him by God. And if he goes sailing, he will return quickly. And if he is ill, he will be cured quickly. And even if there is a disaster, it will be alright. And he will receive blessings and safety, God the Exalted willing. And God knows best. Amen.

[This chapter] is on the Prophet Yūsuf, peace be upon him. This augury resembles bitterness: there will be sorrow. But happiness will be obtained quickly and it will last forever. And any undertaking will be successful and achieve its goals. And if [the person goes] sailing, it will be safe, God the Exalted willing. And God knows best. Amen.

This chapter is on the augury of the Prophet Ismā'īl, peace be upon him. And this augury is very good: he will obtain a lot and will be protected from all danger by God. And he will make a huge profit. And he will be able to see all that is good. And if he goes sailing, he will be safe. There will be a little pain, but it is alright as God the Exalted will keep him safe and in peace, God the Exalted willing. And God knows best. Amen.

This chapter is on the augury of the Prophet Ibrāhīm, peace be upon him. This augury is very good: the person will obtain goodness and will be kept safe from all misfortune by God the Exalted. And he will be able to meet the one he loves. And if he goes sailing, he will be safe, but there will be a small financial loss. It is alright, though, because God the Exalted will return him and keep him safe from danger, God the Exalted willing. And God knows best. Amen.

This chapter is on the augury of the Prophet Dāwūd, peace be upon him. This augury is very bad. Any undertaking will go badly and not be successful. If the person goes sailing, there will be destruction or sadness in his heart. And if he is ill, he will be slow to recover. And he will have a lot of enemies. If he picks a wife, she will be bad. And if a woman takes a

⁵¹ In Malay, the third-person singular pronouns – '*dia*', '*ia*' or '*nya*' – are genderless and could therefore equally refer to a man or a woman. For the sake of simplicity, however, the words have been translated as 'he', 'him' or 'his' here rather than 'he/she', 'him/her' or 'his/hers' unless otherwise specified.

husband, he will be bad. He must therefore give alms to cast away his misfortune and bad luck, God the Exalted willing. And God knows best. Amen.

This chapter is the augury of the Prophet 'Īsā, peace be upon him. This augury is very good, and the person will receive happiness and obtain wealth, which is rightful in this life and the next. And he will gain knowledge. However, if he goes sailing, he will be late in returning. And if he is ill, he will be slow to recover. And if a slave escapes, he will be slow in getting him back. If he does business, he will receive a lot of profit and happiness. If he picks a wife, she will also be good. And if there is slander [or conflict], it will be alright; he will be safe, God the Exalted willing. And God knows best. Amen.

This chapter is on the augury of the Prophet Mūsā, peace be upon him. This augury is very good: the person will meet loved ones, and his family will come from afar and experience great happiness. If he is ill, he will recover quickly. And if he is hit by a disaster, it will be alright as God the Glorified and Exalted will protect him. If he goes sailing, illness will occur. He must be patient in order to obtain goodness. There will be peace and safety, God the Exalted willing. And God knows best. Amen.

[This chapter] is on the augury of 'Izrā'īl, peace be upon him. This augury is very bad. If the person travels somewhere, there will be destruction [or] loss. And if he goes trading, it will not have any benefits and there will be a great deal of hatred from others. He must therefore be patient as success will

be granted [eventually], and he must cast away the bad luck for three days and undergo the *berlimau* bathing ceremony in order to be protected by God the Exalted; he will be safe, God the Exalted willing. And God knows best. Amen.

This chapter is on the augury of Mikā'īl, peace be upon him. This augury is very good. The person's livelihood will be made easier by God the Exalted. There is a little bit that is not good, but it is alright. Any undertaking will be successful and everything he wishes for will be obtained. There will be a mishap, however. If he goes sailing, there will not be much profit made, but it will be safe. If a man looks at this augury, he will get a good wife. And God knows best. Amen.

This chapter is on the augury of Isrāfīl, peace be upon him. This augury is very good. If the person is ill, he will recover quickly. And if he goes sailing, it will be peaceful and there will be great happiness. There will be a financial setback, though, but it will be alright as God the Exalted will protect him, and he will be safe and sound in going and returning from danger. And God knows best. Amen.

This chapter is on the augury of Jibrā'īl, peace be upon him. This augury is very good and has many benefits. Firstly, the person's livelihood will be made easy by God the Exalted. And if he seeks knowledge, it will be bestowed upon him by God the Exalted from one day to the next. His goodness and happiness[?] will increase. And those who are envious of and false to him will be moved far away from him by God the Exalted and he will obtain happiness. And God knows best. Amen.

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