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The Champa Pillar (1035 CE) and Its Possible Connection with the Turkic Dynasties

Batu Prasasti Champa (1035 CE) dan Kemungkinan Hubungannya dengan Dinasti Turkic

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ABSTRACT

Physical objects in the forms of pillar and tombstone of Muslims migrants who came to Southeast Asia are of tremendous significance as they are the earliest seeing evidence which indicates Muslim presence in the region. However, the artistic dimensions of these objects are less studied compared to the inscription and material. Therefore, this study intends to investigate the connection between the earliest Islamic evidence found in the Southeast Asia region, the Champa Pillar (1035 CE) and its artistic influence. The art historical method was used in this study to analyse the development and influence of the Islamic art in the region based on style, technique and composition. Based on the analysis, the artistic repertoire in terms of the calligraphy script together with the content of the inscription show a strong connection with the Turkic people from India, particularly the Ghaznavid Dynasty (977-1186 CE). In addition to this, the content is also historically accurate with the development of Islamic Dynasties in the west in terms of event, historical figures and their migration. This suggest that Muslims of Turkic stock from the Ghaznavid Dynasty were among the earliest to migrate to Southeast Asia and settled in Champa, where they established an art guild and their Turkic-Islamic artistic repertoires later influenced the local existing Malay art. This indicates that while the Arabs and Persians were responsible for the spread of Islam, the Turkic people had a role in spreading the Islamic artistic repertoires to Southeast Asia.

Keywords: Champa Pillar; Turkic; Malay art; Islamic art; Malay Archipelago

ABSTRAK

Peninggalan fizikal dalam bentuk tiang batu serta batu nisan imigran Muslim yang berhijrah ke Asia Tenggara merupakan objek yang sangat penting kerana ianya merupakan bukti awal yang menunjukan kehadiran Muslim di rantau ini. Meskipun begitu, dimensi artistik yang terdapat pada objek-objek tersebut tidak dikaji secara mendalam, di mana penelitian terperinci hanya tertumpu kepada jenis bahan serta terjemahan inskripsi. Justeru, tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk menganalisis hubungan diantara objek peninggalan Muslim yang terawal di rantau Asia Tenggara, seperti tiang Champa (1035 M) serta pengaruh keseniannya. Pendekatan yang digunakan dalam kajian ini adalah kaedah sejarah seni yang meneliti perkembangan dan pengaruh seni Islam di rantau Asia Tenggara berdasarkan gaya, teknik dan komposisi. Berdasarkan kepada analisis, jenis kaligrafi serta maklumat sejarah yang terkandung dalam inskripsi tiang Champa menunjukkan bahawa terdapat hubungan atau kaitan yang kuat dengan Muslim berbangsa Turkic dari India, khususnya dari Dinasti Ghaznavid (977-1186 M). Sehubungan dengan itu, maklumat sejarah yang terkandung dalam inskripsi tersebut juga adalah tepat dan selari dengan perkembangan Dinasti Islam di barat dari sudut peristiwa, tokoh sejarah serta corak penghijrahan mereka. Perkara ini menunjukkan bahawa Muslim berbangsa Turkic dari Dinasti Ghaznavid merupakan antara yang terawal berhijrah ke Asia Tenggara dan menetap di Champa, di mana mereka telah menubuhkan persatuan seni dan kraf Islam-Turkic yang kelak mempengaruhi seni tempatan sedia ada. Perkara ini menunjukkan bahawa sementara orang Arab dan Parsi bertanggungjawab dalam menyebarkan agama Islam, orang Turkic memainkan peranan dalam menyebarkan pengaruh seni Islamnya ke Asia Tenggara.

Kata kunci: Tiang Champa; Turkic; Seni Melayu; Seni Islam; Kepulauan Melayu

INTRODUCTION

The history of how and by whom the Islamic faith was introduced in the Malay Archipelago which today consists of modern Indonesia, Peninsular Malaysia, Thailand, Sabah, Sarawak and Brunei has always been a fascinating topic. Many theories have been developed and different perspectives have been examined by both international and local scholars. Even so, most of the research only

focused on the Arab and Arab-Persian's role in religion, culture, economy and politics compared to the Turks. Nevertheless, the all-encompassing term 'Turk' in the study of Southeast Asia and the Malay Archipelago is often used to refer solely to the Ottoman Empire due to its relationship with the sultanate of Aceh in Sumatera during the 16th century. This relationship was essentially strong during the reign of Sultan Selim II (1566-74 CE) as Aceh received help from the Ottomans in the battle against the Portuguese, and again in the 19th century where Sultan Mansur Shah of Aceh sought the help of Sultan Abdulmecid against the Dutch (Peacock & Gallop 2015). However, knowledge about Southeast Asia was known earlier during the reign of Sultan Suleiman 1 The Magnificent Al-Qanuni (1520-1566 CE) where his vizier, Ibrahim Pasha (1523-1536 CE) suggested Ottoman's expansion towards the East which included Southeast Asia (Peacock & Gallop 2015; Rosli & Rozali 2019). While it is true that the Malay Archipelago had connections with the Ottomans, there are evidences of an earlier relationship with the Islamic 'Turk' or 'Turkic' dynasties in India during the 10th century know as the Ghaznavid Dynasty.

'TURKIC' – 'TURKISH' THEMES IN TRADITIONAL MALAY LITERARY AND ARTISTIC REPERTOIRES

Evidence of earlier relationship between the 'Turks' and the 'Turkic' with the Malay Archipelago can be found in various traditional Malay literature of the 14th to mid-17th century (Braginsky 2015). It is, however, important to know the different denotations represented by the respective terms, where 'Turk' or 'Turkic' is used to refer to the Turkic people of Central and Inner Asia and the Pontic-Caspian steppes, while 'Turkish' and 'the Turkish' is referring to the Ottomans (Braginsky 2015). These Turkic-Turkish themes that appear in the traditional Malay literature represented by keywords such as 'Rum', 'Turk', 'Turkestan' and 'Istanbul' can be found in the *Hikayat Muhammad Hanafiyah, Hikayat Amir Hamzah, Bustan al-salatin, Hikayat Aceh* and in several segments of the *Syair Siti Zubaidah* and *Tuhfat al-Nafis* which occurred about 1,200 times in more than 40 texts. These occurrences indicate that the Malay Archipelago is either heavily influenced, inspired or even have ties with the early Turkic dynasties. Reid (2015) is in line with the first, as he stated that the earlier Malay literature were adaptations from the Persians, and the Southeast Asian's understanding of Rum are only based on second-hand descriptions and mythical in terms of lineage, as a powerful ruler with supernatural powers. This, however, is only from a historical documentation perspective where his analysis excludes physical visual evidences that will be discussed in the following. In light of this, Denisova (2011) clarifies that Malay literature in the form of chronicles and annals are an important source for Malay history which was written under the order of the Sultan with the intention to praise and show the interest and views of the patron. Therefore, historical facts from the traditional Malay literature must be analysed critically in a detailed manner to search for the truth and not as utterly unreliable or fictional as some of the facts are proven legitimate.

Nonetheless, even though the Turkic-Turkish theme is found significantly in traditional Malay literature, it is often being overlooked or only studied by historians and literary scholars, none from an Islamic art perspective that examines Turkic influences in Malay art. This anomaly is indeed puzzling as the Turkic-Turkish theme is by no means marginal in Malay culture and history. Scholars such as Gallop (2005, 2018), Akbar (2015) and Tan (2003) had stated that the Turkic-Turkish themes in Malay art can be found in the east coast of the Malay Peninsular (Terengganu, Kelantan and Patani), especially in Quran manuscripts, Quran illumination and woodcarving. Analysis of the calligraphy script, arabesques and the page layout system used for the east coast Quran shows that they are on par in terms of artistry and technical finesse with the Ottoman, Persian and Indian production but with its own regional preferences and distinct characteristics (Gallop 2018). In addition to his, Dzul Haimi (2007) noticed the Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal (all of which is from a Turkish-Turkic lineage) influence in the Quran illumination art found in the Malay Archipelago. This is further supported by Ros Mahwati and Zuliskandar Ramli (2018a) where they find similarities of the red Quran cover from the east coast region with the Qurans from the Mughal dynasty (2018a: 197), where cotton from Gujerat, India was used for the binding process (Ros Mahwati & Zuliskandar Ramli 2018b; Ros Mahwati 2018). Particularly interesting is the fact that the arts and crafts were a guided activity during the Safavid Dynasty period (1501-1722 CE), where the artist had their own guild and organized into workshops or studios either in

bazaars, royal studios or the Sultan's libraries (Dzul Haimi 1997). This practice is similarly mentioned in the Champa Pillar, where an arts guild leaded by the *Naqib 'Amr* was established at a bazaar in Champa. In addition to this, the keywords found in traditional Malay literature such as 'Rum', 'Turk' and 'Turkestan' were probably referring to other Turkic dynasties that exists in Central Asia, Iran and Anatolia (Asia minor, modern day Turkey) rather than the Ottomans, as 'Rum' would be referring to the eastern Roman Empire (Constantinople) in Anatolia which was conquered by the Seljuks and later established the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum (1077-1308 CE) (Reid 2015: 26). This indicates that the Malays had an established relation with the Turks in terms of culture rather than political before the Ottoman Empire.

METHODOLOGY

The task to analyse and find connections of all the early Turkic dynasties with the Malay Archipelago would be deemed impossible. Therefore, several archaeological object such as a pillar which is related to the Islamic history of the Malay Archipelago is selected for this study as it would help to identify and narrow down which Turkic dynasty is within the time scope of the pillar. Archaeological objects such as pillars and tombstones are favoured because they are the early seeing sources of history in the Malay Archipelago but are often neglected and the potential data they provide has barely been exploited (Lambourn 2008). This is supported by Feener et al. (2021) as he stated that the dynamic engagement with complex and changing configurations of trans-regional Islamic influences in forms of material culture, such as pillars and tombstones in Southeast Asia are unfortunately neglected within the mainstream studies of Islamic art history. Due to this, there are no recent study – except for the cultural relations of the Malays with the Ottomans – conducted to analyse the possible Turkic-Islamic art influence in Malay Islamic art.

Hence, this study would adopt the art history methodology often used in the study of Islamic art, especially those involving alphabets and motifs with different variations and regional preferences which are analysed visually. Grabar (2006) had provided a comprehensive definition of the art history methodology, where he defined it as a method that analyses the different qualitative variations of "things" made by man that range from technique of manufacture, or other connotations, to style, with its definition of manners of treating a subject (composition, proportion, colour, etc.) to mode, a complex combination of style and subject matter (2006: 255). This method was pioneered by Whelan (1990) in the study of Islamic calligraphy, who used traditional art historical methods to distinguish two groups of early Quran manuscripts written in angular scripts. Other than Whelan, this method was later adapted by leading scholars in the field of Islamic art, such as Blair (2006) in her study of the development of Islamic calligraphy and monumental inscriptions from early Islamic Iran and Transoxiana (1992), and the more recent survey of Arabesques entitled "The Arabesque: An Introduction" (2018) by Muhammad Isa Waley and other contributing writers. Although there are other methods, namely the textual, palaeographic, typology and others; these methods offer more problems rather than answers (Blair 2006: 109-110; Lambourn 2008: 266-272) thus being the reason for adopting the art historical method.

This method is essential as it combines visual and textual evidence in order to analyse the possible Turkic influences in the Malay Islamic art found on early Muslim objects. Visual and textual analysis is important because the proper historical writing of Southeast Asia's Islamic dynasties was only recorded from the 16th or 17th century onwards, while earlier texts that combine history with myth and oral tradition were only made known through early 19th century copies (Lambourn 2008). Moreover, the Islamic art used on pillars and tombstones also offer valuable information of the artistic developments of the region. It is for this reason that the inscribed pillar or tombstone are treated as the main source of historical evidence as the detailed epitaphs and artistic repertoires offers hard data that is essential in the absence of early written history in discussing the early Islamic Southeast Asia.

ANALYSIS OF THE CONTENT AND ARTISTIC DIMENSION OF THE CHAMPA PILLAR (1035 CE)

The aim of this study is to analyse the early visual sources in the form of a stone pillar to examine the possible influences and connections of the early Turkic-Turkish dynasties with the Malay Archipelago based on the epitaphs and the Islamic art used. However, this study would only focus on the Turkic rather than the Turkish (Ottomans) as the

time scope or date inscribed on the Champa Pillar is much earlier than the establishment of the Ottoman Empire in the late 13th century. It is for this reason the Champa Pillar dated 1035 CE is significant and selected for this study. Other than being the earliest Muslim evidence in the Malay Archipelago (Othman Yatim 1985; Othman Yatim & Abdul Halim Nasir 1990), the pillar also serves as a historical document which records the arrival and establishment of a small Turkic-Muslim society in Champa. The epitaph reveals that the Turkic-Muslim community in Champa were once people who served the Ghaznavid Sultan for his conquest in India, but later fled to Southeast Asia to start a new life and explore new opportunities in trade, arts and crafts. Therefore, to understand the artistic development of the Islamic art in the Malay Archipelago, the Champa Pillar would serve as the earliest and most important epitaph as the content comprises subjects related to arts and relations with the early Turkic dynasties from Central Asia. However, scholars have different opinions regarding the legitimacy of the pillar and has been heavily debated since.

According to Haw (2017), the Champa pillar which was found in the Phan Rang region (Champa), southern Vietnam was first studied by Ravaisse in 1922 in his journal titled *"Deux Inscription Coufiques du Campa"*. Unfortunately, the original journal of Ravaisse could not be acquired, and most of the references regarding the Champa Pillar are extracted from other studies which had been translated and cited in articles by Fatimi (1963), Zakaria Ali (1994), Kalus (2003), Lotfi (2012) and Haw (2017) to name a few. Even so, late scholars who examined Ravaisse study had only focused on the historical aspects, the origins of the pillar rather than the artistic dimensions of the pillar. For example, Kalus (2003) had stated that the Champa Pillar did not originate from Champa, but failed to identify the origin. This was answered by Lotfi (2012) who studied the epitaph based on palaeographic comparisons and linguistic analysis where, according to him, the Champa Pillar and the tombstone of Abu Kamil (1039 CE) were engraved and originated from Kairouan (Qayrawan) in Tunisia, but at two very distant dates, 11th and 19th century for the latter. Meanwhile, Haw (2017) stated that the Champa Pillar and the tombstone of Abu Kamil were carried in ships as stone ballast from somewhere else and did not originate from Champa at all. His judgement was based on Kalus and Guillot (2008) hypothesis of the Leran inscription in Jawa dated 1082 CE where the idea of tombstone for stone ballast first appeared. Haw then analysed the inscriptions from a historical perspective and stated that there were no records concerning a local Muslim convert community in the Champa region during the early 11th century. Due to this, Haw claimed the Champa Pillar as being "out of place" and from somewhere else in which he agreed with Lofti that it originated from North Africa. Even so, there are several problematic issues that will be argued.

To start with, Lotfi analysis is more focused on the tombstone of Abu Kamil rather than the Champa Pillar, and is analysed from a text, linguistic, *madhhab* and *aqidah* perspective, not Islamic art. The text and linguistic analysis are problematic as the palaeographic method is not suitable for dating artistic objects especially in Islamic art (Blair 2006: 109-110). In addition to this, Kalus (2003) and Lotfi (2012) believed that the early Muslims who came to Southeast Asia – for example Abu Kamil – as a *Shia* from the Fatimid Dynasty (909-1171 CE). This is based on Abu Kamil's tombstone inscription where salutation to the Prophet and his *Ahl al Bayt* were only mentioned, while the Prophets companion were not. However, this understanding is erroneous as they had failed to understand the political and historical development of the Shia faction as the term "Shia" or "Alid" during the periods of the Umayyad (661-750 CE) and Abbasid Caliphate (750-1258 CE) was mainly a political term referring to the partisans of 'Ali *(shi'at Ali)*, the Prophet's cousins and son in law, who supported him during the election to the Caliphate soon after the death of the Prophet (al-Attas 2011). Therefore, the term should not be mistaken to be referring to the Shia Muslims who adhere to the much later develop *madhhab* and established a separate state of their own since the early 16th century (al-Attas 2011) or the Shia ideology that is believed to enter Malaysia in 1979 after the Iran Revolution as their ideology (A. Halim Daud, Zarina & Nor Azizan 2018; Mariam & Mohd Fauzi 2018). For example, the concept of *Nūr Muhammad* practiced by Southeast Asia Sufi scholars of the 16th until 19th century, is different and unrelated to the Shia doctrine (Wan Qashishah Akmal, Ahmad Fakhrurrazi, Shahidan Radiman & Abdul Latif Samian 2020).

Moreover, since both of the epitaphs were the earliest Islamic evidence found in the same region in Southeast Asia, Lotfi concluded that both of them must have the same origin, even though his analysis is more focused on the tombstone of Abu Kamil. However, to question the origin of the pillar and tombstone is not something of an important matter

compared to the information of the epitaph. It is already known that the Champa region and several ports in the Malay Peninsular were frequented by Muslim traders and merchants from the Islamic lands, but this does not necessarily mean the locals had accepted the Islamic faith as Champa was not the first region to accept Islam in Southeast Asia. It is established that Islam was first introduced in Sumatera during the period between the 9th and 10th century or even earlier where the first Muslim Kingdom in the Malay Archipelago, Samudra-Pasai, was established in the late 13th century and its first Muslim king, Sultan al-Malik al Salih died in 1297 CE (al-Attas 2011; Ahmat Adam 2019).

As for Haw, it is true that the locals in Champa were by no means converted to Islam as the faith was accepted in the late 15th century (Fatimi 1963). But as far as I am aware, no one has claimed the Champa Pillar or the tombstone of Abu Kamil as representing a local Muslim convert. These early tombstones only indicate 'Muslim presence' who were probably merchants and traders that are scattered throughout the Malay Archipelago, near ports frequented by Arab, Persian, India and Chinese traders (Nik Hassan Shuhaimi & Zuliskandar Ramli 2018). Other than this, there are also several Muslim related objects that were found, such as the coins dating from the Sasanian and Abbasid period (758-1258 CE) found in Yarang, Patani and also in Kuala Sungai Merbok, Kedah to name a few (Nik Hassan Shuhaimi & Zuliskandar Ramli 2018).

As for Malaysia, the earliest region to accept the Islamic faith was Terengganu on the northeast coast of the Malay Peninsula, marked by the *Batu Bersurat Terenggnu* dated 1303 CE where the content mentions the ruler of Terengganu upheld the Islamic law in the region (al-Attas 1969, 2015). Unlike the Champa Pillar, the Terengganu inscription was made locally and originated from the region based on the analysis of the type of stone, which is Dolorite and commonly found in the *Hulu Terengganu* region (Hamat 2015: 87-90). This is further strengthened by the discovery of a bronze bucket in Terengganu first dated 1307 CE by Nik Hassan Shuhaimi (2015:120) but was later clarified by Ahmet Adam (2017) that the actual date of the bucket is 27 Rajab 577 Sanah (equivalent to 6 December 1181), 122 years earlier than the *Batu Bersurat Terengganu*. These findings indicate an earlier Muslim settlement in the region. In addition to this, analysis of the calligraphy script used for the *Batu Bersurat Terengganu* shows similarities with the Champa Pillar, where it is believed that the writer had used the same Arabic script used by the Muslims in Champa (Nik Hassan Shuhaimi & Zuliskandar Ramli 2018: 502). This indicates that the Muslims either of Arab, Arab-Persian or Turkic origin from Champa had probably migrated to Terengganu where the Islamic faith and their culture (including the Islamic arts) influenced the locals.

In addition to this, Haw's conclusion that both the Champa Pillar and the tombstone of Abu Kamil were brought to the Malay Archipelago as stone ballast is not acceptable. This is due to the reason that the Champa Pillar, in its fullest sense judging from the inscription, serves as a record to commemorate an event that occurred in the region and has relations with the artistic development of the Islamic art in the Malay Archipelago, after the faith was accepted. This recorded event coincides perfectly with real historical figure, the timeline of the Islamic dynasties and the development of the Malay Archipelago cultural history that shows ties with the Terengganu inscription. Therefore, if the Champa Pillar was truly carried from somewhere else as stone ballast, it should not have any connections or relations with the development of the Malay Islamic history, which in this case, is proven otherwise. However, it we were to accept the notion that the Champa Pillar was carried as stone ballast from "somewhere else", then that somewhere must be from Terengganu or the northeast coast region of the Malay Peninsular, not from North Africa as suggested by Lotfi and Haw as both of the dates proposed are truly far separated. This makes it a perplexed matter to how both of the epitaphs could even have any possible relation or share the same origin if there is a major difference in the dates and calligraphy style.

It is not strange to link Champa with the northeast coast region of the Malay Peninsular as the people of Champa (or Chams) share several similarities and have close ties with the Malay Peninsular, especially Kelantan in terms of race, culture and royal lineage. According to Ken (2004), the Chams belong to the same Malayo-Polynesian (Austronesian) group as the Malays and had been frequenting Kelantan for many centuries, marked by the names of several places such as Pengkala Chepa and Kampung Chepa. Furthermore, it is believed that one of the earliest moques in Kelantan, the Masjid Kampung Laut was also built by Cham sailors who frequented the region (al-Ahmadi 1978). As for culture, there are several names of costume and textile that are

associated with the Chams, such as the *tanjak Chepa* (headdress), *sutra Chepa* (silk), *kain Chepa* (cloth), *Chepa* one of the types of *keris* (dagger), *padi Chepa* (Champa paddy) and also the *sanggul Chepa* (a hair decoration) (Ken 2004). In addition to this, the royal lineage of Kelantan and Champa recorded in the *Babad Kelantan* (Kelantan Annals) also mentions of a Cham prince who arrived in Kelantan in the mid-17th century known as Nik Mustafa or Po Rome, who, after many years residing in Kelantan, returned to Champa and was made King with the title Sultan Abdul Hamid.

It is believed that due to this, the Malay migration from Kelantan to Champa was the major factor in influencing the people to convert to Islam (Manguin & Nicholl 1985). Therefore, it is not a far-fetched idea to assume the Malay-Champa relantionship had started earlier than the mentioned dates, and the Champa Pillar would have most probably originated from Kelantan, Terenganu or Patani as they are neighbouring states on the northeast coast of the Malay Peninsular and share the same artistic development in Islamic art. This is evident especially in the *awan larat* which is a form of Malay arabesques, and the illumination art of the Quran and manuscripts known as the 'East Coast' style (Gallop 2005). It is further strengthened by Nik Rashideen's statement, a renowned Malay woodcarver from Kelantan who stated that Patani had owned the finest art, while Terengganu has the finest artistry and Kelantan was in between (Gallop 2002).

With this in mind, Ravaisse (in Fatimi 1963) stated that during the first thirty years of the 11th century, Turkic people from the Ghaznavid dynasty in Pakistan had fled from India to Champa in southern Vietnam as it is the nearest stage on the sea route to China. Even so, the voyage must have crossed through the Malay Archipelago via the trans-peninsular route ways, where eight of the most important routes are located on the northern part of the Malay Peninsular such as (i) The Three Pagodas and Three Cedis routes (ii) the Tennasserim River route (iii) Kra Isthmus route (iv) Takuapa River route (v) Trang River route (vi) Kedah-Patani route (vii) Perak-Patani route and (viii) Kelantan-Malacca route where it would connect sailors from the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea from the west, to the Gulf of Thailand and South China Sea in the east (Wheatley 1961: XXVI). Hence, to understand clearly the information recorded on the Champa Pillar, it is vital for us to refer back to the original translation of the pillar by Ravaisse.

FIGURE 1. The Champa Pillar (1035 CE)
Source: Zakaria Ali 1994

According to Zakaria Ali (1994), the Champa Pillar consists of inscriptions written using a crude Kufic calligraphic script. Due to the condition of the pillar, the inscriptions is hard to read and decipher in its fullest sense. Even so, there are a few words that is understandable, such as *'ashrin'* on line 2, '*naqib Amri'* on line 3, '*qasr'* on line 4 and a reference to one '*Sultan Mahmud'* on line 8 (Zakaria Ali 1994: 22). Although not much of the text can be deciphered and translated fully, Ravaisse analysis of the readable words such as *'naqib'* and *'Sultan Mahmud'* are extracted from his article as cited by Fatimi (1963) as follows:

"Line 3 – The *Naqib 'Amr*. The naqib was a merchant or a craftsman, who was in charge of the management of the community to which he belonged. Members of each trade, especially barbers, carpenters, builders, tailors, turners and some other corporations, were led by a syndic named *Shaykh al-sūq*, who was helped by the *Naqib al-sūq*. The latter, appointed by his Chief, generally used to preside in the presence of the master-companions over the initiation of the candidates – apprentices. It was a little family-reunion, which took place at the young boy's father's house and contained some ritual practices, a good meal, an exchange of presents, and the repeated recitation of the *Surat al-Fatiha*. This ceremony of initiation to the minor Arts' and Crafts' Guild still exist in larger cities and is called *shadd al-Walad* (the act binding the apprentice)"

(1963: 48)

As for the one named *Sultan Mahmud,* Ravaisse offers a long interpretation with three different conjectures, but herein will be cited only those concerned with the Turkic theme as follows:

"Line 8 – *Sultan Mahmud.* …This name, 'Mahmud' being associated with the word 'Sultan' ceases to be trivial. This title, 'Sultan', was not an ordinary word in the Mediaeval Ages, when Sultans of the Buwayhid *(Buyids*),* Saljuqid *(Seljuk*),* and Ghaznavid dynasties raised its status so high. …Maybe we shall reach the truth if we stay in the domain of history, if we consider this name and this title as representing a really historical character, i.e the most illustrious conqueror of the eleven century, Sultan Mahmud Ghaznawi, who reigned from 998 to 1030 in Iran (almost completely) and covered himself with glory as he subjected the Buddhist populations of Bamyan, Punjab and Gujerat to the laws of Islam, as he destroyed the idols of Shaivaism, and he founded the Kingdom of Lahore in Pakistan. No doubt, during the first thirty years of the 11th century more than one man, more than one client, in fact many soldiers of the armies of the fanatic iconoclast of Somnath settled in India, or went from India to Champa, the nearest stage of the sea route to China, to make a fortune in exploiting sugarcanes, lacquer, gums, precious stones, bamboo, wood, etc. Then, would not the 8th line of our inscription (which is so badly incomplete) be established thus 'So-and-so son of so-and-so, freed from Sultan Mahmud the Ghaznavide'. If this last hypothesis has some chance to appear defendable, then this inscription is, doubtless, contemporary to the first one (1039) – the Ghaznavide expedition in Hindustan took place in 1025 (sic). This deduction, based on the fact that in epigraphy a historical name is representative of a date, find itself entirely proved by the result of the paleaographical examination"

(1963: 48-50)

Although Ravaisse had used the palaeographic method in his analysis, his interest is more focused on the content of the inscription and its historical significance rather than the exoteric characteristics of the calligraphy script used. In light of this, his analysis clearly indicates the Malay Archipelago connection with the early Turkic dynasties from Central Asia in Pakistan, namely the Ghaznavid Dynasty (977-1186 CE). However, this connection might have had a bigger impact on culture compared to the Islamic faith which is dominated by the Hadrami Arabs (Fauzi, Mohammad, Kayadibi 2011). This is due to the fact that the inscription stated the establishment of an art guild where the arts and crafts, which might carry the influence of the Abbasid, Ghaznavid and the Seljuks; were introduced and influenced the locals. Therefore, what is meant by 'India' or 'Indian' as clarified by al-Attas were actually referring to the Arabs, Arab-Persian, Turkey (or Turkic) and Magrhib as far as the religious literary is concerned (1969: 25), but it might also include culture as well. In light of this, it is clear that there were artisans or craftsman of Turkic origins amongst the Ghaznavid soldiers that fled to Champa and brought their culture, especially the Islamic arts preference of the Ghaznavid, to Southeast Asia in their search for asylum and establishing a small Muslim community.

The presence of a Muslim community in Champa was even mentioned in the Chinese record known as *Ling-wai-tai-ta*, written by Chau Ju-Kua who was a historian and politician during the Song dynasty, in which he remarked that "In the fourth year of the period *yung hai* (987 CE) the Chams again in the company of *Ta-Shi* (Arabs) brought tribute to the court of China" (Tibbets 1981: 51). Although the original meaning of the term *"Ta-Shi"* is 'Arab', Haw (2018) clarifies that the term *'Ta-shi'* or *'Dashi'* does not specifically refer to the Arabs solely during the 10th to the 12th century. This is based on the fact that the term was quickly being applied to the people of all the countries conquered by the Muslim-Arabs, hence becoming a general name for more than a thousand countries where only a few particular names are known (Haw 2018: 6). Therefore, to understand exactly who and where *'Dashi'* or *'Ta-Shi'* would be referring to in the *Song shi* records is not very clear. In addition to this, Haw (2018) stated that Lahore had also become the capital of the Muslim Ghaznavids by the 12th century, who themselves are of Turkic origins from Central Asia. This meant that *'Dashi'* included parts of what is now Pakistan and even north-west India, and the term would also be referring to both Turkic Muslims or even those living in the lands ruled by Muslims who themselves are not Muslims. This further strengthens Southeast Asia's connection with the early Turkic dynasty, especially the Ghaznavid. However, given that the Champa Pillar consists only of text and no Islamic art besides the calligraphy is present, we shall therefore treat the calligraphy

which is Kufic, as a form of Islamic art where the origins and its development shall be discussed in the following.

In the mid-8th centuries, the Abbasid Caliphate rose as a Muslim superpower after defeating the Ummayyad Caliphate and established their capital first in Kufa then Baghdad (Iraq) where they controlled an empire that stretched between North Africa and western Central Asia (Hattstein & Delius 2004). The Abbasid rule from Iraq can be divided into two periods, the first begins with establishing the foundation of the dynasty until the Buyids, a Shia Iranian dynasty from northern Iran under Adud al-Daula (949-983 CE) who gained power and influence, entered Baghdad and reduced the caliphs to puppet status (Hattstein & Delius 2004: 90). The second period, which lasted until the fall of Baghdad by the Mongols in 1258 CE, the ruling power in Iran and Iraq were transferred from a series of nominal caliphs, first in the hands of the Buyids (945-1055 CE) then the Seljuks (1055-1194 CE) in which Egypt and Syria who were previously under the rule of Abbasid had become independent by this time, where the caliphate then further fractured to autonomous dynasties.

In the 9th century, the capital of the Abbasid was moved from Kufa to Samarra, near Tighris in Baghdad during the reign of caliph al-Mansur (r. 754-775 CE). There, he created a new governing elite consisting of converts drawn from old Iranian families that had traditionally served the state, such as the Barmakids, a former Buddhist aristocrat from Central Asia and also freed slaves from Africa and especially Central Asian Turks who were trained to serve as the caliph's army. With the sudden influx of Turkic people in Baghdad, they eventually gained status and power and established their own dynasty – such as the Ghaznavid and the Seljuk – which was heavily influenced and thoroughly Persianised in terms of language, culture, literature and habits (Meisami 1999: 143), thus regarded by some as a "Persian dynasty" despite of their Central Asia Turkic origin (Ziad 2006: 293). Nevertheless, the Turkic culture had also heavily influenced the formation of the Abbasid art of Samarra (Grube 1966), which was favoured more than the late classical antiquity of the acanthus and palmettes as well as Egyptian/ Coptic and Hellenistic elements that were used in the pre-arabesque phase known as "Not Yet an Arabesque" from the end of the 7th century until the appearance of the fully formed arabesque in the 13th century (Barakat 2018a). These new elements were favoured because the Islamic aesthetic priorities were starting to be regulated in the 9th century, where religious fundamentalists imposed a stricter view on the decorative repertoire to restore order and to spread from Baghdad a more restrained and orderly architectural and decorative tradition that was later adapted to suit different regional traditions and tastes (Barakat 2018b). It is for this reason that the Abbasid art and architecture were influenced by three major traditions, namely the Sasanian, Central Asian and Seljuk (Binous, Hawari, Marin & Öney 2002: 19).

In addition to this, Barakat (2018a) defines the term 'arabesque' as a term "used to denote a leaf scroll, which in its early manifestation either provides the background of calligraphy, or grows out of a Kufic inscription, or else fills the interstices between letters and words or within geometric interlacing" (2018a: 33). The combination of calligraphy and arabesques leaves first appeared during the Abbasid era in tin-glazed earthenware bowls dating from the 9th and 10th centuries which features a single line of stylised Kufic script with foliage tips within the Arabic letters such as *Alif* and *Lam*, forming what is known as the 'foliated Kufic' (Barakat 2018c). This foliated Kufic script style is characterised by the bifurcated endings of the letters, which form leaves with two or three lobes where the leaves grow to form stems and more leaves to fit in the spaces between the letters. This script then spread throughout the Abbasid empire from Baghdad to Samarkand and beyond in the 10th century where arabesques foliage started to adorn funerary inscriptions as early as the 10th and 11th centuries in Anatolia, Central Asia and Persia (Barakat 2018a, 2018c). Other than this, the foliated Kufic script with arabesques leaf scrolls were also evident in Egypt (Blair 1992 & Grohmann 1957). The combination of arabesque and calligraphy was then used to adorn artefacts and as architectural ornament which reached its highest and ripest degree of development during the Fatimid period in the late 12th and 13th century in Egypt, marked by the evolution of the foliated Kufic script to floriated Kufic (Barakat 2018a; Hattstein & Delius 2004). While on the other hand, the Seljuks of Rum (1081-1307 CE) in Anatolia only rendered a small amount of ornamentation with calligraphy on architectural (Barakat 2018b).

Therefore, we can now place the Champa pillar dated 1035 CE in between the period of the Abbasid (750-1258 CE), Ghaznavid (977-1186 CE) and the Seljuk (1037-1194 CE), where the foliated Kufic

script originated and disseminated to Southeast Asia at the same time it spread towards Samarkand, Central Asia and Persia in the 10th and 11th centuries by the Arabs or the Turkic people. Even so, Ravaisse and Lotfi argued that the calligraphy script of the Champa pillar and the tombstone of Abu Kamil (1039 CE) in Champa originated from Kairouan in Tunisia during the reign of the Fatimid (909-1171 CE) based on the fine foliated Kufic script similar to those found in North Africa. This analysis is problematic as the Kufic script used for the Champa Pillar does not share the same characteristics of the foliated Kufic script of the Fatimid. The calligraphy script is relatively simple and crude which indicates that the Arabic system of writing was still in its infancy in Champa and the intention of the epitaph was to commemorate an event (Zakaria Ali 1994: 22) rather than aesthetics. This is similar to the earliest, longest and the most important epitaph or 'graffito' to survive from the early Islamic period, which is the foundation text scratched on the rock near Ta'if in Hijaz that records the construction of a dam by the Umayyad caliph, Mu'awiya in 677-68 CE (Blair 2006). According to Blair (2006), the Ta'if inscription was written in a period where the Arabic writing system was still being developed which started from the time of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH until the early 9th century (Blair 2006: 80-85).

Therefore, if we were to compare the Ta'if inscription with the Champa Pillar in terms of the simplicity of the script and the use of the inscription, the similarities are obvious. This indicates that the Kufic script using Arabic alphabets was being introduced to the Champa region in the early 11th Century, which was brought by the Turkic-Muslim people along with their Islamic art preferences of the Abbasid, Ghaznavid and the Seljuk. Based on this, there are two different conjectures on how the Turkic influence had spread in the Malay Archipelago. The first is that a small Muslim community consisting of diplomats, traders, merchants and also artisans were most probably travelling from Baghdad or Central Asia to China where they visited Champa and established an art guild to sell and trade their crafts to fund their journey which later influenced the artistic development of the locals. While the second, which is in line with Ravaisse and Fatimi, is that the Turkic people consisting of soldiers who were also artisans from the Ghaznavid Dynasty in Pakistan had sailed towards Champa to find asylum. However, due to their failed efforts trying to convert the locals to Islam and exert much influence in Champa during the 10th and 11th century (Zakaria Ali 1994: 22), the small Turkic community could have migrated to the Malay Peninsular, specifically the east coast of Malaysia where their presence is marked by the similarities of the Arabic script used on the Champa Pillar with the *Batu Bersurat Terengganu* (Nik Hassan Shuhaimi & Zuliskandar Ramli 2018: 503).

This is supported by Fatimi (1963) as he mentioned a considerable exodus of Muslims from Champa to China due to the unsettled political conditions that started towards the end of the 10th century (Fatimi 1963: 52). Although Fatimi only suggested the movement of the migration is towards the east, the Muslims of Champa would have also migrated downwards towards the Malay Peninsular by sea, and would arrive upon the east coast of the Malay Peninsular if they had travelled in the South West direction, where the *Batu Bersurat Terengganu* is found. However, based on the discussion earlier, we could not reject the probability that the Champa Pillar could have actually originated from the northeast coast of the Malay Peninsular and was carried to Champa by merchants travelling by sea. This connection is further strengthened and verified based on the analysis done on the Islamic art in Terengganu by scholars such as Gallop (2005, 2018), Akbar (2015) and Tan (2007), where the artistic development related to calligraphy in Quran manuscripts, woodcarving and also the art of manuscript illumination shows similarities with the Ottomans, which shares the same artistic lineage with the Ghaznavid from Central Asia (Aslanapa 1973).

These similarities can be seen in the calligraphy style used, such as *Naskh* for the text of the Quran, *Thuluth* for the *surah* headings, and *Riqa'* for colophons (Akbar 2015). Moroever, Tan (2007) stated that the scribe who had mastered the principles of the Ottoman calligraphy and supplied the calligraphic composition to the Malay woodcarver in Terengganu, is mentioned in one source as Abdurrahman Istanbuli. Other than this, Akbar (2015) justifies that the clearest proof of Ottoman influence in Southeast Asia Quran is evident based on the *ayet ber kenar* system, where each *juz'* occupies exactly twenty pages and each page ends with a complete verse. This *ayet ber kenar* page layout system was introduced, developed and only found in Ottoman Qurans starting from the late 16th century and is only found in the Quran of Southeast Asia from the east coast of the Malay Peninsula

(Gallop 2005). Another Ottoman influence found in the Terengganu and Patani Quran manuscript is the naming of the *surah*, where the heading for the *surah al-Fatihah* is sometimes written as *surat al-Fatihat al-Kitab,* similar to the Ottoman Quran where the name first appeared and documented in a Quran written by Dervis Ali dated 1664 CE and later used by Hafiz Osman, the influential Ottoman calligrapher in the 17th century (Akbar 2015).

Different from other Quran manuscripts found in various places in Southeast Asia, the Terengganu manuscript is often written by trained calligraphers which makes it the finest, beautiful, precise and has the best quality in terms of calligraphy and illumination compared to others (Gallop 2005; Akbar 2015). It is for this reason that the Terengganu Quran is identified as the source of the finest illuminated Islamic manuscripts from Southeast Asia, and the foliate and floral ornamentation in the art of Terengganu is best defined as the 'Malay arabesque' (Gallop 2018). Therefore, it is not surprising that the Islamic art development in Terengganu has strong connections with the Ottomans, as the art of the Ottomans were also influenced by the Timurid, the small Turkoman principalities in Anatolia, Chinese, Seljuk and Ghaznavid in the 16th century, and later the French, Baroque and Rococo influence during the so-called Tulip Period in the 18th century (Barakat 2018; Binous et al. 2002; Aslanapa 1971). Even so, the Turkic-Malay connection had started much earlier in the 12th century compared to the Ottomans in the late 16th – 17th century. It is unfortunate that none of these early objects from the 12th century survived throughout the time as it would most probably be looted or destroyed by natural disaster as the material used is generally of less durable material such wood and bricks (Lambourn 2003; Abdul Halim Nasir 1986, 1995). However, the practice of using wood for grave headstone can still be seen in Kelantan and Terengganu, such as the grave of Tokku Tuan Syed Muhammad Ahmad in Cabang Tiga, Losong, Terengganu and also the grave of Permaisuri Long Yunus, Che Ku Tuan Nawi situated in the Langgar Royal Cemetery, Kota Bharu dated mid-18th century (Farish Noor & Eddin Khoo 2003).

CONCLUSION

The Turkic Islamic Dynasties, namely the Buyid, Ghaznavid and Seljuk; clearly has connection with the Malay Archipelago in terms of the artistic repertoires as evident in calligraphy script and motif used to adorn funerary inscriptions. Although this study only examines one tombstone, it is however a vital piece of information as it connects the Malay Archipelago with the Turkic dynasties in India. Findings from this analysis would then help us understand the Malay-Turkic artistic relationship better when analysing other earlier Muslim tombstones, such as the tombstone of Abu Kamil (1039 CE) in Champa, Putri Makhdarah binti Ali (1048 CE) in Brunei and the Leran inscription (1082 CE) in Jawa. Even though Islam in the Malay Archipelago did not gave birth to an empire which left behind massive physical evidences in forms of castles, mosques or forts, these small objects consisting of tombstones would suffice in providing a general description or idea of the artistic influence accepted by the Malays at the same time the Islamic faith was introduced. These Turkic influences was then later adapted and combined with the local existing forms of art and motifs which then created a unique distinct characteristic of the Malay Islamic Art with their own special regional preferences. Therefore, it is with hope that more archaeological findings in the future would reveal more evidence of this connection as this would provide a better and detailed understanding of the artistic development in the Malay Archipelago after the Islamic faith was accepted by the locals.

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