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MANUSCRIPT OF HIKAYAT HANG TUAH (PNM: MSS 1713): A STUDY OF DECORATIVE BINDING AND ITS MEANING

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ABSTRACT

This concept paper attempts to investigate the history of Islamic binding from the point of view of binding structure and decoration motifs in Hikayat Hang Tuah manuscript (PNM: MSS 1713). In this study, binding is defined as a mechanised process of physically folding a sheet of folio. Partially, the process involves folding the sheets together into a number of sections and turning into a codex. In addition to this, the ancient manuscript is written by hand with ink. Also, the association materials in the making of Islamic manuscript used with appropriate organic materials. The difference between western and Islamic binding involves the type of styles, materials and techniques used in the binding. Unlike binding from western style, the style of Islamic binding is influenced by the Arabic world tradition and follows the Islamic principle. The art decoration is inspired by the great dynasty during the Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal era. Generally, the decoration in the Islamic art involves organic motifs, geometry, calligraphy and abstracts. On this subject, one of the famous Malay folktales in Malay World is Hikayat Hang Tuah. In other words, Hikayat Hang Tuah manuscript is the scientific study of the manuscript, the primary examination was mainly focused on the binding structure, materials, technique, and illumination. This is followed by the problem statement which emphasises the diversity of decoration on the form and contents in the Hikayat Hang Tuah, as well as to make comparisons between the manuscripts produced in the east coast of the Malay Peninsula. The aim of this research is to investigate the history of Malay binding from the point of view of its binding structure and its decoration motifs in Hikayat Hang Tuah manuscript (PNM: MSS 1713). It also aims to uncover the philosophical message and its meaning. The methodology used in the analysis was the qualitative methods. The method used in this research varies. The main method is associated with conservation procedure. This procedure involved an examination of the leather, observation on the paper, sampling and sample preparation on the hand-sewn and analysis characteristic on the illumination. Besides, information is received from the library such as journals, books and articles. Other aids in the field study are delivery information from different sources,

interviews from the point of geographically and historically perspectives. This research will reveal the significant differences in the origins of the motifs and design elements represented in the Malay world, based on visual and technical arrangements found in the Hikayat Hang Tuah manuscript. Furthermore, the influence of this analysis will serve as a scholarly reference for the comparative and critical analysis from tradition motifs leading into innovative creation from traditional craftwork.

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1. Introduction

The manuscript in codex form is one of the most brilliant art creations inspired by a great dynasty that once ruled the Turkish, Persian and India empires. Islamic aesthetics are defined as art depictions from nature governed by the beliefs of Islamic principles. In general, the history of the Islamic manuscript codex is reflected in decorative aspects, which is the art of its construction in the binding and text. During the establishment of the Islamic tradition during the 1st – 7th AD century, the remarkable embellishing text of the Mushaf was adorned with modest geometry designs as the main decoration. Indeed, throughout the centuries, Islamic binding has improved through new forms and techniques.

History has left us with a rich tradition of artwork in manuscripts found in the Malay world that are associated with Islamic art form. It was mentioned in the problem statement that although history had given us hints on the sources of the characteristics of manuscripts, nevertheless, the depth of research in this area is noticeably inadequate. In view of the scientific study on the Technical Terms of Bookbinding, codicology has a primary role to explore the available evidence. This study will investigate the valuable contents in the manuscript of Hikayat Hang Tuah (MSS:1713): A Study of Decorative Binding and its Meaning. In particular, searching for the region of origin, identifying the meaning of features in the book cover and inner pages.

For objectives of the study, the first part of this research will use the codicology format to examine the characteristic on the binding structure. The term ‘examine’ used by scholars for the examination of physical and technique has been referred to François Déroche (2006), in his publication *Islamic Codicology – an Introduction to the Study of Manuscripts in Arabic Script*. This includes analysing the characteristics of the manuscript including the decorative elements, calligraphy and dominant pigments in the illumination, the hand-sewn patterns, watermark which may give hints on its fundamental history in the Malay World.

2. Literature Review

This section focuses on existing materials from past and current scholarly articles that relate to particular topics on tradition binding structure and decoration motifs. This includes other sources that are relevant to specific areas of study such as literature issue, conception of fundamental findings in the form and construction of humanities as well as developing a theory that contributes in knowledge while performing the study. This study divides the framework into two themes. In the beginning, the study provides information on the codicology procedure used in the Malay manuscript.

Also, the existing theories of past scholar that contributes in knowledge and structure of the study.

i. Previous scholarly articles with codicology procedure used in the Malay manuscript

The Hikayat Malay manuscript refers to earlier Malay literature or narrative stories inspired by important events. Hikayat Malay manuscripts are found with or without illustrations and colourful images that accompany the description of the manuscripts, regardless whether its religious studies, socio-cultural or political context. However, the previous research only focused in comparing the binding and decoration. This study will also apply a conservation procedure called codicology. A detailed observation will be handled particularly on the visual (element and principle of art) and the technical part (material, technique etc.) of the manuscript.

The main method is the codicology study which could be used to describe general information. This implies an examination of the ancient manuscripts and their interrelationships such as physical, history and structure. Also, with this method it will distinguish the identity of the regional aspect in Hikayat Hang Tuah manuscript. In order to understand the ground theory of art research used in this period, the theory on structuralism will be performed as general characteristic. This theory will examine the language studies that explain and describe the language structures in different contexts. In addition, the use of method codicology and structuralism theory, will give flexibility in understanding the concept interpretation language which is full of imaginary and can be conceptualised as abstract. The five stages are a combination of general information and characteristic into sampling, data collection and findings. In this case, the information was found in the Hikayat Hang Tuah which are sorted out according to the standard physical information and characteristics, which are found on the book cover and Illumination decoration.

1	Book title	<i>Hikayat Hang Tuah</i>
2	Year	1865AD / 1282 AH
3	Completeness	Complete
4	Volume	1
5	No. of pages + flyleaves	183 pages. + 1
6	Folio dimensions	H-33.5 cm, W-21.5 cm, T-4cm
7	Size of text area	H-18.5cm, W-13.2cm
8	No of lines	13
9	Colour of ink	Black text with red highlight.
10	Scripts style	Nasta'liq, Naskh
11	Illumination	Opening pages
12	Marginal text	Correction text
13	Binding	Red leather with gold stamping.
14	Book cover	Rebound full-binding
15	Type of paper	European paper light yellow or cream colour with watermark.
16	Important features	Catchwords, Colophon, Headband and Endband.
17	Others	All pages complete restoration. A few pages found iron gall and distorted.
18	Doubleur	Erbu paper (marble paper) Fore edge flap and Envelope flap.

Table 1: Physical codicology description Hikayat Hang Tuah, a number of conclusions based on the evidence available accordingly to Gazek (2009).

For example, Ros Mahwati (2015) in her work, *Penjilidan Manuscript Al-Qur'an Pantai Timur Sebelum Abad ke-20 Masihi: Kepandaian dan Harta Intelektual Tempatan* explained her view of study, the Islamic culture and technology that existed and used before the 20th century, which were mostly absorbed with the taste that it came from majority of the Islamic community area in east

coast of Malay Peninsula. Based on the cover of Hikayat Hang Tuah there is a possibility that the art decoration is from the east coast of Malay Peninsula. Besides that, Gallop & Ali Akbar (2006) in *The Art of the Qur'an in Banten: regarding calligraphy and illumination* also highlighted that these comparisons will help to show whether the characteristic feature on the manuscript was derived from the broader Islamic tradition. Whether the features reflected a Nusantara style or they are, in fact, unique itself. In order to gain a better understanding of the Malay manuscripts, the focus of study pays attention on the art of binding manuscript. Especially, the construction of these manuscripts needs to be observed and analyzed more specifically on the elements and techniques used. According to Dzul Haimi (1999), it was mentioned in the creating manuscript that there are many elements which contribute to the appreciation of the formalistic stage. Any procedure or arrangement of works such as colour, tone, line, shape, appearance, and space area are part of the combination which produces the composition making of manuscript.

On this subject, the lack of knowledge in understanding the concept of the art form in the manuscript can affect the creation of false assumptions and may lead to wrong interpretations. More importantly, each manuscript is unique and must be described individually. As a matter of fact, it is recommended that this research provides in detail the issues, challenges and areas of concern on the present physical and historical aspects. According to Dzul Haimi (2007), the problem became even more complicated when each glittering Quran that reaches our hands today has been unmarked. This means there are no khittat and mudhahib records. Nevertheless, the ornamented al-Qur'an can still be traced to its origins through a detailed study on its decorative art style. Recognising these types of al-Qur'an in terms of its diversity can help us to recognise the form of ornamentation in the Malay world. It is evident that every artwork will manifest some of the local thoughts, concepts and cultures. Local features are what will be characterised by us through visible languages.

One of the most important features of the Hikayat Hang Tuah manuscript is that the front and back covers were lined with a red leather with features of gilded ornament motif. Even though, there are no relevant sources that Hikayat Hang Tuah manuscript was one that came from the east coast of the Malay Peninsula, except from the point of view of Ros Mahwati & Zuliskandar (2016) who explored on the aspect of red Qur'an bindings in the 19th century east coast. This physical analysis has gone far and beyond to reveal that the Red Qur'an was accorded the primary role of carrying the name to one of the east coast Malay Peninsula Qur'an style which was also known as the Terengganu style. The following classification is based on Gallop (2005), which is the binding style mainly wrapped with vibrant red colour and tanned leather as its cover. In addition, the lavish style of embellishment beautification on the cover, the gold stamping used in Malay Qur'an are not only an integral part of the ornamentation but is also, distinctive as one of the technique characteristics in the Malay Archipelago to decorate bookbinding. Yet, this study still develops a method to identity the origin of the production. Although it was found that the style of bookbinding was adopted from Western, Middle East or Central Asia, nevertheless, the art of Malay manuscript took many different forms and has a central place in the history of Islamic arts. According to Dzul Haimi (2007), who mentioned that the ornaments in the Malay world, is best recognized by the artistic style found in the Qur'an of the three largest Islamic dynasties in the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal era. These three Islamic dynasties have made valuable contributions in determining the form of al-Quran style in Malay. Generally, manuscripts from the Malay world has influenced the interdependence of factors which are evident in these three Islamic dynasties.

ii. The existing theoretical in the past study

This chapter contains discussion on the theoretical framework of the study concept. Indeed, there are various theories that are founded on different fields of knowledge. However, the use of appropriate theories is important because it helps to associate the studied objects through the perspective of the arts.

The term codicology is used to imply an examination of ancient manuscript and their interrelationships such as physical, history and structure. In other words, to illustrate Hikayat Hang Tuah manuscript in the scientific study of the codex, the primary examination is focused on the binding, material, structure and images either in illumination and illustrator or seal. Referring to a Supplement in the Oxford English Dictionary (1972), codicology is to study the manuscript as physical objects in order to identify the workshop that produced them.

Linguistics is the scientific study of a form of language. It implicates that the structure of language can be divided into different fields such as sound, sentence, form, construction, shape, composition, meaning and context. Many researchers were involved in analyzing the theory of language and one of them is Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913). He developed a branch of linguistics called “Structural Linguistics” which elaborates the method into an expression of Structuralism.

Based from Saussure’s (1857-1913) study, “words are signs, and in linguistics we are studying the science of signs: semiology.” Structuralism, is a study of language studies that explains and describes language structures in different contexts. He mentioned, structuralism can be divided into two different types of language features, namely speech and grammar. Usually the use of speech in language is presented as a reflection. Another view of language is grammar. Generally, grammar is related to writing which is full of imaginary and can be conceptualised as abstract. On the other hand, this related language can apply for the historical comparison or the function perspective method. The existing thoughts in language can help to seek an excuse to achieve an understanding that consists of explicit and implicit elements.

The principles of Malay concept on traditional aesthetics proposed by Zakaria Ali (1989) were composition, colour, theme, shape, structure, and balance. According to Zakaria Ali (1989) in a chapter within *Seni Dan Seniman Esei-esei Seni Halus*, he explored an aspect which constitutes the principles with a structural theory that has relationship with the visual drawing. It begin with dots which allows the creation of incredible artwork. On the other hand, structure is a frame that combines the parts on the face of the stick. Moreover, the structure can be divided into two subtitles: super and sub. Super-structure means the vertical, horizontal and curved lines. Sub-structures are small lines that integrate the parts into one. These parts are often highlighted by colour areas. The colour areas are separated from one another through the lines and sometimes it dark. To appreciate the concept of structure depends on this visual information.

Mohd Johari (2008) in *Apresiasi & Kritikan Seni Visual*, viewed that the stated theoretical approach has been regarded as a basic structure in the art criticism system. Although, it has its own strength and advantages. but it can only be explained in its own way too. On the other hand, structuralism theory emphasises that every art critic is capable of forming or renewing the artwork. For example, such activities can only take place within certain limits and disciplines. As has been mentioned, the emphasis given on the relevance to show the relationship will depend on the whole artwork. Therefore, the art analyses the structuralists, just like other science analysis practices.

Also, it emphasises the link between visible words and languages, between material with medium, convention, or element and between meaning and content. “Art is an impersonation of natural resources” according to Socrates. Abu Hassan Sham and Hashim bin Musa in *Kosmologi Melayu Islam Dalam Tradisi Persuratan Melayu Lama*, cited that the essence and the concept of the study of language science was confirmed by S.M. Naquib al-Attas. He mentioned that a word is actually a sign, a symbol; and knowing it in the real state is knowing what it means, what it symbolises, and what it means. Furthermore, to ensure a better understanding about the language, every word needs to have meaning. This is because only certain word is considered to have its own existence, free from its meaning, for assuming there is such a word and the word is no longer a sign or symbol. In addition, the word study can simply be interpreted as a word that will lead to deviation from the underlying truth.

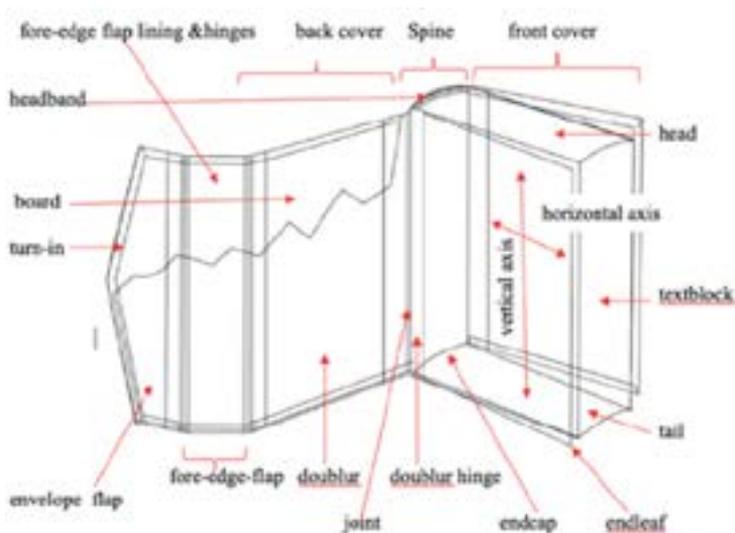


Plate 1: Technical Terms of Bookbinding.

The Technical Terms of Bookbinding is a general term which describes the book structure. In other words, this indicate the bindings in the form of mechanised processes. This is prepared separately from the board, spine, book, and sewing. The aspects on the technical term structure allows you to understand the way the book is opened.

3. Methodology

The methodology used in the analysis was the qualitative method. The methods used in this research varies. The main method is associated with the conservation procedure and codicology examination. The codicology examination is used for analysing the study whereas analysis is mainly focused on certain historical features on the physical and material manuscript. The initial phase of the study is mainly through the conservation procedure which involves an examination of the leather, observation of the paper, sampling and sample preparation on the hand-sewn and analysis characteristic on the illumination. In addition, the information is received from the library, such as journals, books and articles. Other aids, include photographs on areas of interest for assembling information from field study interviews. Besides that, to be engaged on the delivery evidence are from

different point of geographically and historically perspectives. This research will reveal the origins of the significance that are hidden in the motifs and design elements that are represented in the Malay world.

i. Examination method



Plate 2: Micro lens Borg.



Plate 3: Equipment four angle lighting.

Amongst the various analytical instrumentation, micro lens borg was chosen to study the characteristics of the organic materials. The microscope with micro lens borg comes equipped with four angle lighting, iPhone 7 and tripod. Alternatively, micro lens borg is another device used by the researcher to identify the raw material in leather. Following is the close-up photography at four locations in the red leather book cover of Hikayat Hang Tuah Manuscript. This micro lens borg is appropriately applied to this study as it can give a better opinion on the relevant morphology. In fact, by using under optical lens it helps to reveal any evidence that has featured on the grain surface pattern. Not only that, it can define the types of animal species found in cow, lamb, calf, goat, horse, deer and camel. With the samples as evidence obtained from analysing the images, it helps to narrow down the animal inhabitants in a geographical territorial entity.

ii. Observation on the object



Plate 4: The image of procedure visible light from the torchlight in the front paper (folio).

The fourth method is specifically concerned with the significant elements which were garnished at the Hikayat Hang Tuah (PNM: MSS 1713). The study was undertaken to have a better understanding of the decoration in the opening page as a main base. Special attention was given to the diversity motifs used to create the painting and illuminations from the Islamic Malay World. The research is aimed to determine and investigate the main focus on decorative pattern features in the form of flower motifs, abstract, geometry, plants, and designs of the foliage leaves. In addition, each part of the decorative patterns in the illumination was selected in order to identify the characteristic and to interpret the meaning of motifs. Furthermore, the process examines the characteristic concerned in the illumination which are important as it is adequate as new evidence.

4. Result and Discussion

The decoration in the Hikayat Hang Tuah encompasses the visual and physical art produced in the Islamic world. The highly decorations in the luxury manuscript use either red leather, geometry, abstracts or floral motifs furnishing in illumination to represent the artistic production that flourished in the Malay world. Further physical and visual examination was conducted by recording more data for analysis. Given below are some selected parts of the manuscript for examination.

i. Visual Examination



Plate 7: Texture of the hard grain surface pattern. PNM MSS:1713.

During examination, this micro lens borg will be performing close-up photography on four different skin samples on the red leather of the front cover of Hikayat Hang Tuah manuscript (PNM MSS: 1713). Each sample will position the scan in a place that has categories of variations attributable to hair pores pattern, relatively skin type and colour of skin surface. The sample preparation is taking place on deteriorated skin, surface damage, light colour and dark colour on the leather surface. Furthermore, these four specimens are made for comparisons with the similarity pattern and to investigate the material dispensed from skin structure in the red leather. As a result of this, the skin leather from the red leather are included in the hard grain category. On this subject, with sample close-up images, the visible hard grain on the leather surface has revealed the characteristic on the red leather which featured a grain pattern from a goat skin leather. The examination referring to (Haines, 1981), in *Leather Under the Microscope*.

ii. Observation in Paper: watermark



Plate 8: An example of watermark found in the Hikayat Hang Tuah manuscript (PNM MSS: 1713).



Plate 9: The shape of the lion watermark. Source: Collection of W.A. Churchill.

While investigating each page (folio) of the Hikayat Hang Tuah manuscript, numerous watermark images have been discovered. With all information coming from the visible images of the watermark, the verification will trace the identity of information in all detail. However, some of the watermark samples are hard to trace due to insufficient major structures. Thus, the rest of the images discovered have been recorded by photography. Majority of the watermark found on the paper of Hikayat Hang Tuah manuscript (PNM MSS: 1713) was a 'lions (Concordia, etc) of Van der Ley (VdL). Generally, this type of countermark is found in the European paper product meant for the British market. The examination refers to the Watermarks on Paper in Holland, England, France, etc.; during the XVII and XVIII centuries and their interconnection (Churchill, 1990).

iii. Sample Preparation: sewn-hand section



Plate 10: On the left, a sample demonstration of Hikayat Hang Tuah manuscript (PNM MSS: 1713) is sewn with thread. The page shows the thread of a link-stitch on three stations. On the right, a sample the three stations are indicated by the arrow.

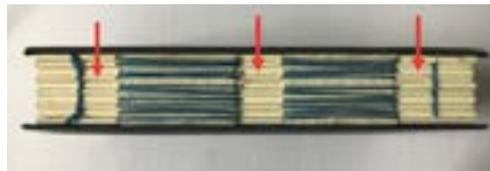


Plate 11: On the spine side, a sample demonstration of link-stitch on three stations are indicate by the arrow.

This analysis will unfold bit by bit the techniques of sewing on the spine. To illustrate, these examples of images are taken from Hikayat Hang Tuah manuscript which have been used as a sample reference analysis of the sewing technique. In addition, this investigation will be recorded by photography of a few angles' images for analysis of the actual technique and name of the stitch. According to Scheper, (2015), this type of stitch on the spine-side of the gathering is link-stitch on three stations. Generally, these hand-sewn stitches are basic techniques commonly use to hold the grip of the paper sheets together in the Malay World manuscripts.

iv. Investigate decoration motifs in the illumination

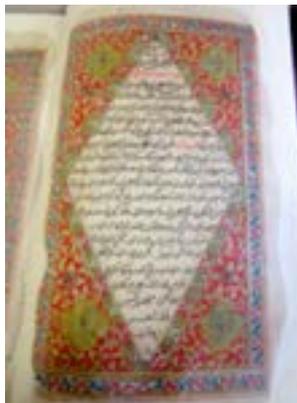


Plate 12: Illumination in opening page of Hikayat Hang Tuah manuscript PNM (MSS: 1713).

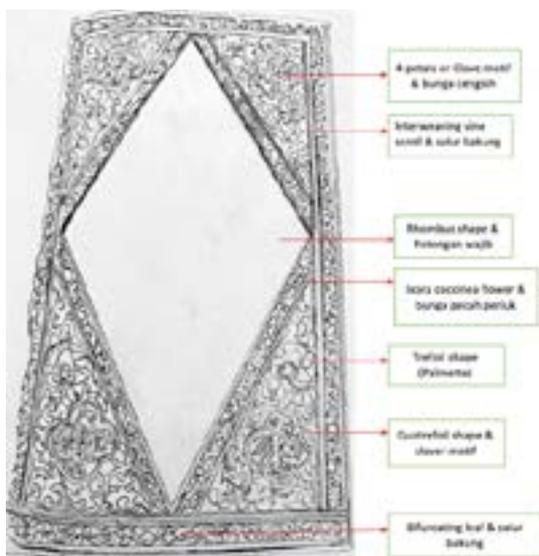


Plate 13: Line drawing shows a geometry and nature element composition.

In the early stage of decoration in the Malay world of manuscripts, an essential part of the plant's body or the organic elements and naturalistic floral shapes are the principal inspiration to the artisan for decoration. During analysis, this study shows the result by observing from illumination motifs which were based on imagination and inspired by nature from surrounding areas. The following outline drawing shows each part of the element features; floral pattern, abstracts motifs, and geometry decorated in the manuscript Hikayat Hang Tuah, that may give hints on the verdict of the naturalistic floral shapes or organic plants. It also includes the interpretations of the motifs which are related to the traditional craft in the Malay world.

A further study on the illumination of Hikayat Hang Tuah, usually on the second page it has illumination or is called as opening page with two complete pages with illumination of the frontispieces. The divisions between the different section decorations are highlighted by the alternate background colours of white and red. The painter decorates the illumination indicating that he has chosen to be lavish, strong, and to beautify the beginning two pages. The prominent embellishment are geometric shapes, as well as arabesque or foliate scrolls, floral and vegetal motif decorations. The division section of decoration is accomplished using vibrant blue, green, red, yellow palette on a white background.

The main frame panel is surrounded by a border decorated all-over with a repeated design of scrolling vine leaves which are painted white and blue on a red background. Interestingly, the four corner-pieces feature a symmetrical shape outlined in quatrefoil which is depicted by four-leaves or clover motif, and featuring a tiny flower with four pedals such as clove (*bunga cengkih*) or *Ixora* (*bunga pecah periuk* or *bunga siantan* or *jejarum*) with bifurcating leaf. The surrounding of the area is filled with palmette (trefoil) which features a tiny shaped triangle in the middle, scrolling the branch of a bifurcating leaf (*sulur bakung*)—a main motif found in many traditions of art craft objects in the Malay Peninsula. Meanwhile, the two pages are adorned with a geometric shape called a rhombus or diamond shape in the central space which is filled with an inscription containing the background of the introduction to the story of the Hikayat Hang Tuah. Usually, the decoration compartment in the shape

of rhombus in a central space shape in Malay is called “potongan wajib” and it is mostly used to fill in the texts. According to PNM (2002) in the Warisan Manuscript Melayu, the beginning of the starting line in the space “potongan wajib” is written inside as “Ini Hikayat Hang Tuah yang amat setiaawan pada tuannya dan terlalu sangat berbuat kebaktian kepada tuannya.”

5. Conclusion

This research is based on the investigation of the manuscript of Hikayat Hang Tuah (MSS: 1713): A study of decorative binding and its meaning. The manuscript is one of the collections from the National Library of Malaysia. The research will be carried out throughout the study of Hikayat Hang Tuah manuscript which was produced during the 15th and 17th century as the existing Hikayat Hang Tuah (MSS: 1713) is not in good condition. The conservation treatment process has effectively saved the manuscript. All pages have been placed under restoration because half of the important pages which was filled with issues has damaging historic inks which are iron gall ink and the piece of red leather cover was cut-off to prevent it from further deterioration. As a result, the findings from this chapter revealed that the motif decoration in the illumination, has associate motifs from the origin region in the Malay Archipelago. Furthermore, each significance found in the illumination of Hikayat Hang Tuah manuscript, has similarity that has appeared in the decoration illumination from the other Hikayat manuscript book cover, or was inspired by decorative illumination or motifs in the Qur’an book covers from other Islamic regions. Even though the pattern and ornamentation of the Hikayat Hang Tuah manuscript are motif concept and elements which were found in the Malay World but due to the cultural transmission, there is a unity in the form of decoration. Not to mention, the contribution by Islam’s development in the Malay region which became a trading centre for commercial routes and was a vibrant part of the economy in Southeast Asia. During that period in time, the characteristic decorations that were found in represent Islamic art form, motifs and abstract designs used in manuscripts were commonly found in traditional craftwork, such as woodcarving, textile, ceramic, sculpture and metalwork. The main fundamental design which led to innovative creations were the flower-patterned, geometrical shaped, coloured pigments and style of calligraphy. In the implication of the research, this research makes a comprehensive collection of codicology data which is related to Hikayat Hang Tuah’s collection in Malaysia, Europe, Indonesia and other countries. Furthermore, the result of this study can be used by museum professional and scholars to identify and examine the Hikayat Hang Tuah and other manuscript collection. In addition, the findings identified in this research are beneficial for future researcher to enhance related findings with the East Coast Manuscript.

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