

Jawi Study Group

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The foundation of the Jawi Study Group (JSG, or “*Jawi Monjo Kenkyukai*” in Japanese, meaning “Study Group on Jawi Documents in Southeast Asia”) was initiated in April 2001 by a group of Japanese researchers sharing a common interest in Jawi documents. Since then, JSG has organized study meetings, seminars and a symposium, collected research materials and information concerning Jawi documents, and published newsletters as well as one special issue of a journal. Through these activities, JSG has attracted an increasing number of scholars and now consists of twenty-six members. The secretariat of JSG was originally located in Tokyo at the Institute of Asian Cultures, Sophia University, and KAWASHIMA Midori from the Institute was responsible for the administration of JSG until 2003, when the secretariat was transferred to the current office at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies.

The objective of JSG was described in the special issue on Jawi documents of the *Journal of Sophia Asian Studies (JSAS)*, see below) as follows:

This project is aimed at collecting information concerning Jawi documents in various parts of Southeast Asia, and comparing them on a region-wide basis. The activities in this project include examining the history and present situation of the study of Jawi documents in Southeast Asia and in the West, identifying problems in utilizing these documents as source materials in Southeast Asian studies, and considering ways of overcoming such problems.

It must be clarified at this point that the term *Jawi* used by JSG has a broader connotation than what is commonly understood by the term. In its usual sense, Jawi script is a type of Arabic script adapted for writing Malay. The script typically contains the twenty-eight original Arabic letters and six additional letters unique to Jawi, in a fashion similar to the practice adopted by other non-Arabic speaking Muslims, notably Persians, who have also adapted the Arabic script. The oldest evidence of the use of the Jawi script is found on the Terengganu inscription of 1303 A.D. However, from the view point of the study of the history and culture of Southeast Asia, what may be more important is the fact that adapted Arabic scripts have been used not only by the Malay language but also by many other Austronesian languages, including Javanese, Sundanese, Buginese, Butonese, Acehese in Indonesia, languages of the Philippines, and Cham in Cambodia. The JSG uses the term *Jawi* to refer to all these Arabic-based scripts.

Although in modern times the use of the Jawi script has been in general replaced by the Latin script, the importance of Jawi documents for studying the history and culture of Southeast Asia will never diminish. Especially in Malaysia, the Jawi script was, and in certain fields and areas still is, extensively used in a variety of fields, including inscriptions, chronicles, genealogies, tales, religious texts on Islam, diplomatic treaties, legal documents, contracts, petitions and other administrative documents, and newspapers and magazines.

Regrettably, however, a great part of Jawi documents have been untapped for academic research and few have been transliterated or translated. It seems this indifference is largely due to the tendency to consider the material represented by Jawi documents as insignificant and also to the lack of academic infrastructures helping interested students develop their research skills in using Jawi documents. This shortcoming is particularly pronounced in Japan. The purpose of JSG is first of all to ameliorate this situation and then to gather information on Jawi documents in various areas of Southeast Asia in order to provide a solid foundation for further comparative research.

Several favorable factors have contributed to the growth of interest in Jawi documents in Japan. First, an increasing number of researchers have discovered the importance of hitherto relatively neglected local documents, not a small part of which are written in the Jawi script. Second, in recent years an interest in Islam, which is inherently connected to the Jawi script, has soared. JSG's first meeting in April 2001 provided for the first time an opportunity for those who are interested in the Jawi script to meet each other, exchange information, and learn more about the script. The members of JSG represent divergent fields of interest, including local histories in Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand, Muslim movement in the South Philippines, Arab immigrants in Indonesia, and modern Malay history, to mention a few.

In the same year JSG also became affiliated with the research project entitled Islamic Area Studies, a project funded by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. JSG was part of the project's second research unit for the study of Society and Economy in the Islamic World. Within this framework, JSG held nine meetings under the theme "People and Popular Movements in the Muslim Areas in Southeast Asia: The Significance of Jawi Documents."

In the following year, JSG received another one-year research grant from the Toyota Foundation with the title "Basic Study of the Jawi Network in Maritime Regions of Southeast Asia" and organized eight regular meetings and one symposium. This symposium was an important milestone for JSG because for the first time JSG was given an opportunity to demonstrate the significance of Jawi documents to a wider audience. This was also probably the first symposium held in Japan exclusively on Jawi documents. It was held on December 1st, 2002, at the Faculty of Letters of Okayama University in conjunction with the 68th Semi-annual Conference of the Japan Society for Southeast Asian History. Six members of JSG successfully read papers on this occasion and the papers were all included in the special issue of *JSAS, Japan Society for Archival Science*.

This special issue of *JSAS* on the study of Jawi documents (Volume 20) was published on December 27, 2002. The introduction to this issue was written by KAWASHIMA Midori, explaining the objective of JSG's activities. The issue was divided into three sections. The first section, entitled "Aspects of Southeast Asia from the viewpoint of the Jawi document," contains twelve articles as follows (those indicated with an asterisk are written in English; otherwise they are in Japanese with an English summary):

"Indian-derived Scripts in Insular Southeast Asia" by AOYAMA Toru

"Writing Foreign Languages with Arabic Letters: The Jawi Script in Comparative Perspective" by
TONAGA Yasushi

"Jawi Materials in West Sumatra, Indonesia: An Analysis of Islamic Journals and Books in the First
Half of the Twentieth Century" by HATTORI Mina

"Arab' Periodicals in the First Half of the Twentieth Century in Southeast Asia" by ARAI Kazuhiro

- “Islamic Publications in Modern Southeast Asia” by MIICHI Ken
 “Inscriptions of the Samrong Bridge of Songkhla in Southeast Asia” by KURODA Keiko
 “Nostalgia, Resistance, and Beyond: Contested Uses of Jawi Islamic Literature and the Political Identity of the Patani Malays”* by Alexander HORSTMANN
 “The Place of Jawi in Contemporary Cambodia”* by Omar Farouk BAJUNID
 “Commentary on the Sebuku Document: Local History from the Perspective of a Minor Polity of Coastal Northeast Borneo”* by Mika OKUSHIMA
 “The Making of Islamic Knowledge at the Periphery: A Case of the Sama Dilaut in Sabah, Malaysia (1950s-70s)” by NAGATSU Kazufumi
 “The Surat Sug: The Jawi Tradition in the Philippines”* by Samuel K. TAN
 “Commentary on a Maranao Petition: Letter of Haji Bogabong, 1934” by KAWASHIMA Midori.

The articles collected in the first section show the diversity of the fields of interest—from pre-Arabic writing traditions in the Southeast Asian Archipelago, to a comparative survey of adapted Arabic scripts by non-Arabic speaking peoples, to the use of Jawi in the areas of Southeast Asia that may be called peripheral. This diversity testifies to the extensive use of the Jawi script worldwide. This part also includes two valuable articles contributed from overseas scholars; one by Alexander HORSTMANN of the Institute for Ethnology, University of Muenster; and the other by Samuel K. TAN, Center for Integrative and Development Studies, University of the Philippines, who had also given a talk at one of the seminars in 2001.

Section two of the issue is intended to be a research tool for those who want to further their understanding of the Jawi script and Jawi documents. This section contains introductory surveys on bibliographies, catalogues and materials concerning the Jawi script:

- The “Bibliography of Indonesian Catalogues on Jawi Documents” jointly contributed by HATTORI Mina and OKUSHIMA Mika (co-editors), AOYAMA Toru, KUNIYA Toru, SUGAHARA Yumi, NISHIO Kanji, MIICHI Ken
 “Jawi Manuscripts in Malaysia: Overview and Reference Books” by NISHIO Kanji and TSUBOI Yuji
 “Qalam and Its Article List in Romanized Malay” by YAMAMOTO Hiroyuki
 “Chapter 20, ‘Many Characteristics of Unbelief in the Present Age’ in the Introduction to Muslim Creed, by Abdul Hadi Awang: Romanized Transcription, Japanese Translation, and Explanatory Notes” by NAKATA Ko.

This second section aims to provide direction to those who wish to pursue their research on Jawi documents. Finally, the third section of the issue is a set of practical guides for working on Jawi documents:

- “An Explanatory Note on the Transliteration of Jawi in 20th Century Malaysia” by YAMAMOTO Hiroyuki
 “Writing Jawi on the Computer” by ARAI Kazuhiro

This special issue is the first ever compilation in Japan of papers exclusively dedicated on subjects related to the Jawi script and Jawi documents. The publication of the issue has been favorably received both in Japan and

overseas. JSG hopes that this issue will stimulate more interest on the subject among scholars and contribute to the development of research on Jawi documents. A copy is available at JSG's secretariat while the stock lasts.

In addition to this special issue, JSG also publishes a newsletter. It has been published on an irregular basis since 2002 and distributed among the members. The eleventh and latest issue was published in June 2004 and can be viewed on the JSG website (see below). Each issue of the newsletter contains reports of the preceding meetings and contributions by the members, including announcements for related seminars, reports of ongoing research, and other information relevant to the study of the Jawi script; some of the material is highly original.

In April 2003 JSG launched its own website to disseminate the results of its activity. The site is bilingual in Japanese and English, although at the moment some pages are still in need of its corresponding English pages. The English homepage can be viewed at <<http://homepage3.nifty.com/tao/jawi-study/index-en.html>>. The website features archives on meetings and publications, including the contents of the newsletters and the special issue of the *JSAS*; a list of textbooks for learning Jawi; references on Jawi script texts; a Jawi Unicode chart and other Jawi-related resources on the Internet; and a collection of photos of the Jawi script as seen on the streets of present Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore. The Jawi Unicode chart is designed to facilitate the use of Unicode fonts on a personal computer so that texts in Jawi script can be exchanged through the Internet. JSG has also started an Internet mailing list to support better communication among the members. This has become a main means of communication for the members of JSG, most of whom live far from each other in Japan. The service is available only to JSG members and the language used is principally Japanese.

Having consolidated its foundation with a series of seminars, a symposium, as well as a collection of materials and references for learning the Jawi script, JSG is now considering a new direction for its activities. One idea is to compile a comprehensive catalogue of periodicals printed in Jawi, including magazines, journals, newspapers and newsletters. Jawi was surprisingly widely used in periodicals published in Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. However many aspects of Jawi periodicals, such as their circulation, readership, reason for choosing Jawi as the script, are not well known. This project attempts to cast light on these social aspects of Jawi periodicals. JSG is pursuing the possibility of carrying out the project in collaboration with the Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa (ILCAA) of Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. It is very much hoped that JSG, which is about to open up a new chapter, will be successful in its future endeavors.
