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QUR'ANIC READINGS AND VERSE DIVISIONS IN 18TH-CENTURY BANTEN QUR'ANS A.51, W.277 AND RAS ARABIC 4

Ervan Nurtawab 

ABSTRACT

This article examines three Qur'ans that probably hail from 18th-century Banten. The first two, A.51 and W.277, are held in the National Library of the Republic of Indonesia, and the third of which, RAS Arabic 4, is part of the collection at the Royal Asiatic Society in the United Kingdom. It undertakes an analysis of the Qur'anic reading and verse numbering systems applied in these manuscripts, using selected samples from *Sūrat al-Kahf* to identify the textual relationships between these three Qur'ans. Examination of these three Qur'ans reveals variations in the ways in which each copy treats verse numbering and locates verse endings. On the basis of the textual analysis undertaken here, the author argues that the copyists of Qur'ans A.51, W.277 and RAS Arabic 4 appear to have applied to the respective text a combination of different methods that determined their approach to the reading and verse numbering systems. The Qur'anic textual transmission process is one in which the copyists referred to older copies but also relied on their own knowledge of *qirā'āt* literature.

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini mengkaji tiga manuskrip al-Qur'an yang kemungkinan berasal dari Banten abad ke-18. Dua manuskrip pertama, A.51 dan W.277, tersimpan di Perpustakaan Nasional Republik Indonesia, dan yang ketiga, RAS Arabic 4, adalah bagian dari koleksi Royal Asiatic Society di Inggris. Artikel ini menganalisis sistem bacaan dan penomoran ayat al-Qur'an yang digunakan di dalam manuskrip-manuskrip tersebut dengan menggunakan contoh-contoh dari *Sūrat al-Kahf* untuk mengidentifikasi hubungan-hubungan tekstual di antara ketiga manuskrip dimaksud. Kajian atas ketiga manuskrip al-Qur'an ini mengungkap berbagai variasi dalam hal setiap salinan menerapkan penomoran ayat dan menempatkan tanda akhir ayat. Berdasarkan analisis tekstual yang dilakukan di sini, penulis berpendapat bahwa para penyalin manuskrip al-Qur'an A.51, W.277, dan RAS Arabic 4 tampaknya menggunakan kombinasi metode-metode berbeda terhadap teks-teks tersebut yang menentukan pendekatan mereka atas sistem bacaan dan penomoran ayat. Proses transmisi tekstual al-Qur'an yang mereka lakukan merujuk pada salinan-salinan yang lebih tua, tetapi juga bergantung pada pengetahuan mereka atas literatur *qirā'āt*.

KEYWORDS

Banten; *muṣḥaf*; Qur'anic manuscripts; verse numbering system; *qirā'āt*

KATA KUNCI

Banten; *muṣḥaf*; manuskrip al-Qur'an; sistem penomoran ayat; *qirā'āt*

Introduction

The preservation of the Qur'an has been a key priority ever since Islam emerged in early 7th-century Arabia. The importance of both Qur'anic recitation and the oral transmission of the scripture was established by the first generation of Muslims, and as a consequence the following generations have been comfortable with memorisation as a means of both transmitting and preserving the holy text. In addition to being preserved in the memories of the believers, the Qur'anic text was also recorded in written form from the time of its revelation. Traditional historical accounts relate how the revealed Words of God were documented in writing during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad (d.632),¹ although it was not until a few years following the death of the Prophet that the Qur'anic revelations were first gathered together and compiled to form a 'book,' in the time of the first Rashidun Caliph, Abū Bakr (r.632–634). The standardisation of the Qur'an during the reign of the third Rashidun Caliph, 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān (r.634–646), however, constitutes the most comprehensive canonisation process and the written codex of the Qur'an, the *muṣḥaf* (pl. *maṣāḥif*), that emerged from this process as the result of Caliph 'Uthmān's project is still, to the present day, referred to as the 'Uthmanic codex (*al-rasm al-'Uthmānī*) (A'zamī 2014; Cook 2004).

During the Umayyad (r. 661–750) and early Abbasid eras, there was another significant development in the Qur'an's history, as Arabic orthography became more established (Small 2011; Déroche 2014; van Putten 2022) and the reading systems (Arabic: *qirā'āt*) were canonised according to transmissions representing the main reading traditions in a number of major Islamic cities (Shah 2020: 194–216; Nasser 2021). The final step in the standardisation of the Qur'an took place during the 1920s, when the Egyptian King Fu'ad I (r.1922–1936) assembled scholars from al-Azhar University to work on the Royal Cairo Edition of the Qur'an which adopted only one reading system, that is the reading of 'Aṣim transmitted by Ḥafṣ, and the Kufan numbering system (Rezvan 1998; Farrin 2019).

The act of Qur'anic recitation is considered to be a form of worship, and this has led to the development of a tradition whereby many believers recite from the Qur'an on a daily basis. This, in turn, led to the proliferation of written Qur'ans alongside the emergence of Muslim settlements in many parts of the Islamic world, including Southeast Asia. Unfortunately, we are unable to identify any evidence of the Qur'an manuscripts that would have accompanied the earliest Muslim settlements in Southeast Asia. Muslims have been politically established in the Southeast Asian region since the 13th century, however the earliest known evidence of Qur'an manuscripts from this region dates from several centuries later.²

The Qur'an manuscript tradition in the Southeast Asian region developed relatively late, compared to other parts of the Islamic world, but the Qur'ans produced in this region have a number of distinctive features. Gallop (2007: 193; 2010: 170), for example, states that Southeast Asian Qur'ans typically did not apply division markers

¹The Islamic tradition has the names of the scribes who were in charge of recording the Qur'an for the Prophet Muhammad, as well as undertaking other scribal duties relating to administration and diplomacy. When it comes to recent Islamic scholarship, two of A'zamī's (2014, 2016) works discuss the names and biographies of the scribes who worked for the Prophet.

²One example is the Qur'an manuscript kept in the Rotterdam Municipal Archives, Gem. 96 D 16, which originated in Johor in 1606 (Riddell 2002).

to mark the tenth, hundredth or two-hundredth verse of the Qur'anic chapters, nor rosette markers, despite the fact that these elements constitute common features of Qur'ans produced throughout the Islamic world. Moreover, Gallop and Akbar (2006: 98–99) note that Southeast Asian Qur'ans are typically produced in a single volume: hardly any multi-volume Qur'an's from this region have ever been found.

In addition to Qur'an manuscripts written in the Arabic script, the Southeast Asian Islamic world also produced much longer, often multi-volume vernacular translations of the Qur'an with additional exegetical glosses, either in phrase-by-phrase or interlinear forms, which constituted a major exegetical text genre. The earliest evidence of such exegeses can be dated to the 17th century through an extant manuscript fragment containing a Malay commentary on *Sūrat al-Kahf*, that is Camb. Ms Or. Ii.6.45, and also a complete Malay Qur'an commentary by 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkilī (d.1693), entitled *Tarjumān al-mustafid*. Both of these exegetical works were produced in 17th-century Aceh (Riddell 1990; 2017). The next textual evidence of exegetical activities dates to several decades after the completion of the *Tarjumān*, but it seems that Aceh ceased to be an active site for the study of the Qur'an, at least in terms of the production of Qur'anic commentaries or translations, in the following century. As will be elaborated below, the scriptorium of Qur'anic studies transferred to the western part of Java during the Banten Sultanate period.

Two major Southeast Asian languages were actively used and spoken in 18th-century Banten. Malay was the lingua franca of Southeast Asia and the language of diplomacy, while Javanese was the language of administration. Both vernacular languages were used in Islamic scholarship and pedagogy, including the study of the Qur'an. Extant manuscripts from the Banten royal library (the contents of which are now held in the National Library of the Republic of Indonesia, PNRI) show the extensive use of both Malay and Javanese in service of understanding Arabic works, especially those related to Qur'anic studies. Both vernacular languages obviously became target languages used in projects which translated the Qur'an and its Arabic commentaries. The use of Malay for pedagogical purposes in this milieu, where Javanese was the daily spoken language, demonstrates attempts by the 18th-century Banten rulers to accommodate the needs of both teachers and students coming from other parts of the archipelago to study Islam.

This article deals with the comparative study of three Qur'an copies with Malay interlinear translations, focusing on the study of the Qur'anic reading and verse numbering systems applied in each copy. The first two Qur'ans, A.51 and W.277, are now held in the National Library of the Republic of Indonesia. The third, RAS Arabic 4, is now part of the collection held by the Royal Asiatic Society in the United Kingdom. The Malay translations found in Qur'ans A.51 and W.277 show a mutual resemblance, and there are indications that both may have been written by the same hand (Gallop and Akbar 2006: 139). Annabel Teh Gallop has recently examined the Malay translations found in Qur'an RAS Arabic 4, and suggests that these also look very like those found in Qur'ans A.51 and W.277 (Gallop 2022: 37), despite being written in a different hand.³

It is important to uncover how these three Qur'ans with identical Malay translations came into being, and the study of these three Qur'ans in isolation will certainly make a

³My thanks to Ali Akbar for sharing his thoughts regarding the calligraphic aspects of RAS Arabic 4.

significant contribution towards our understanding of the Qur'an manuscript tradition in 18th-century Banten for a number of reasons. Firstly, previous studies (Nurtawab 2020; Gallop 2022) show that these three Qur'ans have significant differences in terms of the actual process of copying the Qur'anic text. The copyists deliberately used different Qur'anic reading systems in their reproduction of the original Arabic text, but produced identical Malay translations. This clearly indicates that the production of each Qur'an copy served a different purpose and targeted different readers.

Secondly, in the context of the Southeast Asian region, no previous studies have been conducted to identify the textual genealogy of one particular Qur'an manuscript to another. Given the fact that this aspect has as yet been poorly understood, the identification of textual relationships between particular Qur'ans would greatly contribute to a better understanding of the agency of Qur'anic scribes and a more comprehensive picture of Qur'anic scholarship as it developed in a specific region. Aside from the fact that the respective Malay translations demonstrate the existence of intensive Qur'anic exegetical activity, an attempt to identify the textual stemma of these Qur'an copies will certainly give us a clearer idea about the history of the Qur'an and the Qur'an-copying tradition in 18th-century Banten. Thirdly, the existence of three Qur'ans with identical vernacular translations lends strong support for the case that there was a coherent system of Qur'an learning in place that was intended to serve the goal of a comprehensive Islamic pedagogy. Not only did it aim to provide training in Qur'anic recitation, using specific Qur'anic reading systems and correct pronunciation, but it also served the goal of providing an exegetical guide intended to hone the reader's comprehension skills.

As mentioned above, Quran A.51 was copied using a reading system (the Nāfi'/Qālūn's reading) that was less commonly followed by lay Muslims, and seemed to have been designed for use at an advanced level. Meanwhile, the attempt to transfer the reading system to that of 'Āṣim transmitted by Ḥafṣ found in the Qur'ans W.277 and RAS Arabic 4 indicates that their copyists were targeting lay Muslims, who would use this reading in their daily recitations. These three manuscripts provide an example of how particular copies of the Qur'an show their genealogy and at the same time bear their own distinctive features. My preliminary identification of the verse divisions applied to *Sūrat al-Kahf* in each of these three Qur'ans confirms that there are disagreements in that each copy seemed to have received different treatments in the placement of verse dividers in the form of roundels or circles. This study will therefore now go on to examine what this disagreement in both Qur'anic reading systems and verse divisions tells us about the Qur'an manuscript tradition and the development of relevant Islamic scholarship in 18th-century Banten.

Quranic text transmission and verse numbering systems

Verse division is an important element of the Qur'anic text, and the placement of verse divisions is an issue that can be traced back to the earliest fragments of the Qur'anic materials known to us (Small 2011: 89; Déroche 2014: 135). The Muslim tradition also records that the Prophet Muhammad always paused his recitation at the end of a verse and stopped after every ten verses (al-Dānī 1994: 33). Farrin (2019: 5–6, 35) states that there is evidence of some kind of move towards a preference for specific verse numbering systems following the *maṣāḥif* project initiated by the Umayyad

governor, al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf (d.95/713), in c.84-86/703–705. Since the first century of Islamic Hijri, the Islamic tradition has established a number of verse numbering systems by identifying them based on oral transmissions that represent a number of major urban settlements during the early Islamic period: Medina, Mecca, Basra, Damascus, and Kufa. The six recognised traditions for the verse numbering system are therefore Medinan I and II (as this city was home to two counting traditions), Meccan, Basran, Damascene, and Kufan.

During the four Rashidun caliphates (632–661), Medina remained the centre of Islamic polity, and the early Medinan tradition developed as the norm for Qur’anic textual transmission. Following that, the Islamic imperia tended to endorse certain verse numbering systems over others. Thus, in the early Umayyad period, al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf, for example, initiated the production of Qur’ans intended to replace the version produced by the Caliph ‘Uthmān. To implement this, he referred to the *muṣḥaf al-imām* acquired from ‘Uthmān’s family, but assembled a team consisting of only Basran scholars to carry out the project, leading to a situation where the Umayyad imperium promoted the Basran verse numbering tradition (Farrin 2019: 35; for more on this, see Hamdan 2010: 795–835). The Abbasid dynasty then overthrew the Umayyad dynasty and ruled for about five centuries from 750 to 1258. In the early period of this dynasty, more space was provided for groups of scholars in Kufa, the city where the Umayyad rulers met with the strongest opposition, to have more active engagement in the development of Islamic scholarship, including the Qur’an-copying tradition. The Kufan reading tradition thus became dominant in the textual transmission of the Qur’an during the Abbasid era, and it went on to become even more established during the Ottoman period. The worldwide use of the Kufan reading tradition, which applies the reading of ‘Āṣim transmitted by Ḥafṣ, then became a consideration for al-Azhar university scholars during the 1920s initiative to produce an Egyptian royal standard of the Qur’an implemented by the then king of Egypt, and this edition has now become the norm for printed Qur’ans in the modern Islamic world (Farrin 2019: 35–37; cf. Rezvan 1998; Déroche 2020).

It is worth here citing Farrin’s description of what actually constitutes variance in the verse numbering system, that is: ‘placement of dividers, where one counts the ending of verses’ (2009: 4). With regard to my intention to undertake a comparative study of Qur’ans A.51, W.277 and RAS Arabic 4, the actual placement of these verse dividers in the body of the Qur’anic text is clearly the key issue at hand. That aside, I suggest that those who study this aspect of Qur’anic manuscripts also need to consider the pieces of information that have been provided in the chapter (Arabic: *sūrah*, pl. *suwar*) headings since Umayyad times, as Déroche (2014: 140) notes, when stylistic innovations and adornments were introduced into Qur’an manuscripts, especially when it comes to those produced for the ruling elites. These later developments include elements such as the addition of chapter headings that present more complete information on the names of the chapters, categorisation of chapters as Meccan or Medinan, and the inclusion of the total number of verses according to the verse numbering system that the copyist followed. Some Qur’anic manuscripts include the numbers of words and letters in each chapter in these header sections. In the Southeast Asian context, it is evident that, in some cases, the copyists of Qur’anic manuscripts seemed to have

deliberately provided information on the number of verses that does not correspond to any recognised traditions, and which thus warrant further investigation.

The earliest historical accounts of the Qur'anic manuscript tradition record the use of either single dots or a cluster of dots to function as verse dividers. Later, the use of roundels became the more common practice. While a roundel or circle was a frequently used form of verse marker, variance in the shapes of verse dividers is found in Qur'ans from Southeast Asia. This does not necessarily reflect a development within the Qur'anic manuscript tradition in itself. Rather, differences in the forms of verse marking reflect the technical and personal preferences and choices of the copyist. Qur'ans produced in the palace milieu usually received more elaborate treatment, and those in charge in the production of these Qur'an copies tended to introduce more ornamental and decorative elements in both the body of the text and the margins. Meanwhile, Qur'ans produced outside the palace milieu might have much simpler decoration.

Another element that needs to be considered in any study of the verse numbering systems applied in particular Qur'ans is that of marginalia. Although the number of Qur'anic manuscripts that provide this information is limited, the presentation of this information in marginal notes gives us an impression of how knowledgeable the copyists were about the Qur'anic and Islamic sciences, hinting at their intellectual background and the possible intentions that they had in mind during their Qur'an-copying projects. The presentation of additional information in the margins shows a certain level of awareness among scribal agencies, or scribes working for individual benefactors or as individuals, regarding differences over the number of verses that might be found in the Qur'anic chapters, as well as over the placement of verse dividers.

We could then pose the question of who exactly is in charge of determining what information should be given in the chapter headings, and where the placement of roundels in the main text should be. In studying the Qur'anic manuscripts preserved in the Khalili collection, Déroche (1992: 160) states that '[t]he material from the last part of the manuscript ... provides evidence of the close relationship between calligrapher [copyist] and illuminator, who was often the same person.' Meanwhile, Gallop (2011: 54–55) notes that it is a common practice in the Southeast Asian Qur'anic tradition to write the text in chapter headings using red ink. The chapter heading also included information on the name of the chapter, the number of its verses and its Meccan-Medinan categorisation, expressed in words. In her study of the Antwerp Qur'an, Gallop (2011: 55) points to the copyist as being obviously in charge of this: '[A]fter the text of the Qur'an was written in black ink, spaces were left for the *surah* headings, and the scribe then returned to the book to write in the headings in red ink.' In their observations about Qur'anic manuscripts from Banten, Gallop and Akbar (2016: 115) note that both texts in the chapter headings and the inner pages of Banten Qur'ans were always created by the same hands. This indicates that in many cases the copyists were personally responsible for both texts during the copying process.

Gallop (2011: 53–55) notes that copyists seemed not to have attached verse markers to the ends of all verses, thus the placement of the markers is not always appropriate. This is also the case with Qur'ans from Aceh that she has examined. She has identified similar patterns in the way that the copyist did not mark all verse endings through the proper placement of a verse marker. According to Gallop, this indicates that the actual placement of verse markers in these Qur'anic manuscripts does not always conform to the

current convention. This inconsistency led Gallop to the assumption that practically speaking, the function of verse markers is sometimes to act as an aid for recitation in case of long chapters (Gallop 2011: 54, 2021). Gallop's observation of inconsistencies in the placement of verse markers in some of the Qur'ans she has surveyed makes a striking point, in that Southeast Asian Qur'anic manuscripts seem to have been the product of different production methods, or a combination of them. If the textual transmission process merely relied on copying earlier manuscripts, or dictation from memory, particular Qur'anic manuscripts produced in a specific region should bear identical features in terms of the Qur'anic readings applied and the systems employed for marking the ends of verses.

In our examination of three Qur'ans from 18th-century Banten here, there are several points that determine the direction of the analysis. First, the decision that the copyists made relating to their presentation of verse numbers, usually expressed in words in the chapter headings obviously reflects their acquired knowledge of the Qur'an, from studying the relevant Qur'anic field(s), or through consulting earlier Qur'anic manuscripts available to them. Second, the decision that the copyists made in the placement of verse dividers, in the form of a roundel or other symbol, also obviously demonstrates familiarity with ideas about where verse markers are to be placed in relation to the actual words in the body of the Qur'anic text. The placement of verse markers will thus certainly guide us to an understanding of the copyist's individual scholarly background, and/or of the availability of older Qur'anic copies. When it comes to the latter, copies of the Qur'an produced in a specific region may adhere to a textual stemma. Third, the issue of disagreements between the numbers of verses presented in the chapter headings and the actual verse markers found in the body text sometimes attracted the attention of copyists, who sought to correct or reconcile them. The fact that additional numerals were added to the margins of Qur'an W.277, paralleling roundels or circles in the body text, clearly demonstrates an attempt by the same or a different hand to align the roundels with the number of verses presented in the information in the chapter heading (see Figure 2).

According to Gallop (2011: 54), copyists of the Qur'an seemed to have a tendency to have been more observant in the placement of verse markers in chapters with shorter verses, as opposed to those with longer verses. My observation of how verse markers were placed in certain chapters with shorter verses in some Qur'ans, however, does not sustain this. One example can be seen in the verse divisions of *Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ* in Qur'an Or. Fol. 4134, held in the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin. For this chapter, the information provided by the copyist in the chapter heading is that the verse count numbers only one, rather than the established verse count of four verses according to the Kufan, Basran and Medinan systems, or five verses according to the Meccan and Damascene systems.⁴ The information found in the chapter heading agrees with the actual placement of the verse divider, as the copyist puts only one roundel at the end of the section. This indicates that in some Qur'ans, or, more precisely, in some chapter headings in a particular Qur'an, information on the number of verses and the placement of verse markers may have been presented based on habitual recitation practices. In the

⁴The red ink used for writing the information that accompanies the chapter heading has unfortunately faded. Closer examination was required to determine that the information given reads as follows: *'Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ ḥadā āyāt Makkīyah'* [*Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ*, one verse, Meccan].

context of *Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ* in the Qur'an Or.Fol. 4134, the verse count may reflect the fact that it was the common practice in this milieu to recite this chapter in one breath, or the personal habitual recitation practice of the copyist of this particular Qur'an. There was apparently no available mechanism at the time of this Qur'an's copying to inform the copyist about existing conventions surrounding the precise number of verses for this chapter. Idiosyncrasies in both the presentation of information about the number of verses in Qur'anic chapter headings, and the verse divider placement in the inner pages, are therefore frequently evident in Southeast Asian Qur'an manuscripts.

Investigation of what actually happened during the copying process is essential to understanding the apparent characteristics of Qur'anic manuscripts produced in Southeast Asia, especially the three Qur'ans studied here. As will be elaborated below, although the copyists provided identical Malay translations in their Qur'anic copies, there is variation in the ways in which different reading systems and verse divisions were implemented. The fact that these three Qur'ans contain identical Malay translations, alongside the fact that two of them appear to have been copied by the same hand (Qurans A.51 and W.277) indicates strongly that they may have been produced in the same place and during the same general period of time in 18th-century Banten. It appears to have been the norm for different Qur'an copies to use different reading systems, which implies that they were created for different purposes although Qur'ans A.51 and W.277 were alike in terms of the number of volumes produced (for a physical description, see Gallop and Akbar 2006). This is also the case with Qur'an RAS Arabic 4, despite the fact that this copy physically looks more compact as it is only a single-volume text.

Arabic commentaries, vernacular translations and *qirā'āt* literature

Compared to the Islamic manuscripts produced in other parts of the archipelago where multi-volume Qur'ans are unusual, the Bantenese Sultanate is well known for its collection of large-size, multi-volume Qur'an manuscripts (Gallop and Akbar 2006: 98 and 133). The sultanate was also famous as a centre for the development of Sufism and some Sufi order practices (for more on this, see van Bruinessen 1995). In this section, I would like to emphasise that, in addition to intensive activities in the production of large-size Qur'ans, the Banten Sultanate also saw the flourishing of an Islamic textual tradition that reflected a great interest in the study of the Qur'an. Some of the Qur'ans produced have interlinear translations and additional glosses, and the Banten royal library collection also included works on *qirā'āt*. These factors lead one to assume that there was focused attention on the part of the existing political powers on providing works on specific Islamic disciplines, and that the creation of manuscripts relating to the Qur'an and the Islamic sciences was a deliberate policy. In this section, I would like to show how the production of Banten Qur'ans was closely linked to the ways in which *qirā'āt* scholarship developed in the region. This then affected the ways in which Banten scholars, living in an area so remote from the traditional centres of Islamic learning, were capable of handling the copying of the Qur'an in different ways so as to serve different purposes in Islamic learning.

The characteristics of the Banten royal library collection are clearly discernible from the description of its contents found in a catalogue prepared by Friederich and van

den Berg in 1873, by which time the collection was already part of the Batavia Genootschap collection. Groot (2009: 274) notes that most of the Islamic manuscripts kept at the Batavia Genootschap at that time had been procured through the acquisition of the Banten royal library collection in 1835. In Friederich and van den Berg's (1873) catalogue, Qur'an manuscripts and Arabic commentaries, especially those that contain additional vernacular interlinear translations in both Malay and Javanese, form a large component of the Islamic manuscripts created in Banten. Moreover, the practice of copying of Qur'ans and Arabic commentaries with these interlinear translations meant that the resulting works were much more extensive and voluminous than manuscripts of the same works that had simply been copied in Arabic without the addition of translations.

There are at least four Qur'anic manuscripts from Banten that have been identified as having interlinear translations: three of them (A.51, W.277 and RAS Arabic 4) contain identical Malay translations, and are the texts addressed here, while the fourth (A.54) contains a Javanese translation. Both the Malay and Javanese translations in these four Qur'ans have a clear textual relationship with the contents of the *Jalālayn*. The role of this Arabic commentary in the development of Banten Islamic scholarship was influential, as can be seen from the existence of some manuscripts of the *Jalālayn* in the Banten royal library collection that also have interlinear translations in Javanese. Two examples are coded A.59 and A.55, and comprise four and five volumes respectively.

Not only did Banten scholars show great interest in translating the *Jalālayn*, they were also interested in the study of other Arabic commentaries, which they also translated into Javanese. Indeed, attempts to provide translations of Arabic commentaries other than the *Jalālayn* seemed to have occurred some decades earlier. Friederich and van den Berg's (1873: 70) catalogue lists two manuscripts of other Arabic commentaries that contain interlinear translations, which were identified as bearing the titles *Tafsīr al-Asrār* (a commentary on the mysteries), and *Tafsīr al-Baghāwī* (the commentary of al-Baghāwī). The first manuscript, A.63, was written in 1131/1718–19 in Banten. Copied with additional translations, this work consisted of seven volumes. This clearly demonstrates that Qur'anic exegetical activity in Banten began in the early 18th century with the production of a translation of an Arabic commentary. The Arabic text was written in red ink which had a corrosive effect, making it now unfortunately illegible. However, some parts of the Javanese translations that accompanied the Arabic texts, written in black ink underneath the Arabic, are still readable.

Although written by a different hand, Friederich and van den Berg's catalogue does list another manuscript copy of the Arabic text translated in manuscript A.63, listed in the catalogue as A.62, and the text of this is more readable and allows for further investigation. It differs from A.63 in that it provides no translation for its Arabic text. I have examined several pages of this manuscript and have been able to identify that this commentary provides an interpretation of the Qur'an that reflects a Sufi approach. Based on the information in the colophon, the text of commentary in this manuscript was written in 1196/1781–2.

The second manuscript that contains an interlinear translation, A.61, is entitled *Tafsīr al-Baghāwī*. Although there is no definite date as to when this commentary was copied, it seems likely that the manuscript dates to the 18th century. The existence of vernacular translations in both of these manuscripts is evidence that 18th-century Banten had

developed the most active fields of scholarship on the study of the Qur'an in the entire archipelago at the time. The existence of this Sufi Qur'an commentary with its Javanese translations also proves that early 18th-century Banten exegetical activity did not involve the use of Arabic commentaries that – according to current scholarly consensus – enjoyed the greatest popularity among Southeast Asian Muslims, that is, the commentaries of al-Baghāwī, al-Khāzin, al-Bayḍāwī and the *Jalālayn*. In the following decades, however, Banten Islamic scholars did go on to pay attention to the study of these popular Arabic commentaries.

The existence of interlinear translations alongside Arabic texts meant that these copies of the Qur'an were physically longer, and had to be presented in multiple volumes. This fact alone tells us that these translation projects were difficult to undertake, both in terms of intellectual effort and in the actual production of the manuscript. However, these factors clearly did not deter Banten scholars or their patrons, as we see from the fact that they also undertook the translation of a number of Arabic works of Qur'anic exegesis, both previously to, and during, the same time period that these Qur'ans were copied: namely, *Tafsīr al-Asrār*, *Tafsīr al-Baghāwī* and *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*. An awareness of scholarly interest in Qur'anic exegetical activity is an important aid to our positioning of the significance of the three Qur'ans under observation here. The fact that 18th-century Banten scholars had established a strong tradition of scholarship on the study of the Qur'an and its exegesis indicates that the production of Qur'an copies was very much undertaken with the goal of providing access to Islamic learning. The vernacular translations provided between the lines of the Arabic text in the Qur'ans produced in this milieu therefore served a dual function; as a medium of recitation and, at the same time, of commentary.

As mentioned above, Friederich and van den Berg's catalogue also lists a number of works on the science of *qirā'āt*, which were also probably part of the Banten royal library collection. This provides further evidence that 18th-century Banten had clearly developed a scriptorium which produced Qur'ans in a form that was designed to meet a set of designed objectives in terms of Islamic scholarship. This might range from training in Qur'an recitation designed to accommodate different reading systems, to education in the interpretation and understanding of the meanings of the Qur'an. These learning objectives were deliberately interconnected, and made accessible by the use of vernacular languages as an educational tool, both in Malay and in Javanese.

The fact that we see attempts to correct and amend the reading systems on some of the manuscripts shows that there must have been accepted norms when it comes to variant readings, and proves the existence of scholarship on the *qirā'āt* in 18th-century Banten. The existence of manuscripts that deal with topics relevant to this supports this assumption. Friederich and van den Berg's catalogue lists a manuscript on *qirā'āt* entitled *Taysīr li-ḥifẓ madhāhib al-qurrā' al-sab'ah* by Abū 'Amr 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd ibn 'Uthmān al-Dānī (d.444/1052/3), which is catalogued as A.65. On the basis of the extant manuscripts we still have, it seems safe to assume that the production of Qur'ans in Banten had a strong connection with the existence of other manuscripts on the subject of the Qur'an. Scholars based in this region must have accessed information from the relevant *qirā'āt* and verse numbering literature, and this played a role in the development of the Qur'anic tradition in 18th-century Banten.

Qur'anic readings and verse divisions: a study of *Sūrat al-Kahf* texts

Referring to Gotthelf Bergsträsser, Déroche (2014: 14) states that in Muslim societies, only the recited text of the Qur'an is considered the norm. When Islamic scholars from al-Azhar university, Déroche says, agreed to produce a trustworthy edition of the Qur'an in the 1920s, they did not consider going back to the earliest known copies of the written Qur'an. Instead, they referred to literature in the fields of *qirā'āt* and Arabic orthography that had developed from the 8th century onwards. This raises a question: Did the practice of consulting *qirā'āt* and orthographical literature exist in the Qur'anic manuscript tradition in earlier centuries? Information about the textual relationships of Qur'anic manuscripts produced in a specific region might help us to answer this question.

In the following section, I examine the extent to which the copyists of the Qur'ans A.51, W.277 and RAS Arabic 4 consistently used a specific reading system during their copying projects. My textual examination of these copies is supported by my previous work on Qur'ans A.51 and W.277 where, despite being written by the same hand, both copies show the use of different reading systems, indicating that both copying projects were deliberately undertaken in a particular way in order to serve a specific purpose (see Nurtawab 2020). In addition, Gallop (2022: 37) has recently investigated the existence of another Qur'an copy, RAS Arabic 4, which shows a resemblance in its Malay translations to both Qur'ans A.51 and W.277. Gallop (2022: 37) specifically states: 'RAS Arabic 4 uses the reading transmitted by Ḥafṣ, and can therefore be linked more closely to W.277 than to A.51.'

The Qur'an copyists of 18th-century Banten seemed to have brought their awareness and knowledge of the science of *qirā'āt* to their work. The production of the Qur'ans A.51, W.277, and RAS Arabic 4, for example, clearly proves that the copying of the Qur'an from an older copy did not necessarily mean reproducing an identical work. As will be elaborated, we see that the copyists approached the various reading systems as norms that they were legitimately entitled to modify while making a copy, as opposed to having to faithfully copy the reading system as used in their manuscript prototypes.

Variant reading systems

Al-Dānī (2015: 414–424), in *al-Taysīr fī al-qirā'āt al-sab'*, listed more than 40 places in *Sūrat al-Kahf* where there are one or more different ways of reading a specific verse according to the seven canonical readings. In this section, I will now examine the readings systems used in the 26 places where differences can be identified in the Qur'ans surveyed in this article. The focus of the forthcoming analysis is centred on two different reading systems used in Banten Qur'ans, those attributed to Nāfi' and 'Āṣim, on the grounds that an investigation into differences in selected places will give us sufficient information to reach some conclusions about general patterns in the overall body of Qur'anic texts.

When copying the Qur'an, copyists sometimes make mistakes in vocalising the Arabic script. In instances where this has occurred, I will leave this unremarked upon, while for words with correct vocalisations that conform to a specific reading system, a notification will be given in (..) to identify the specific reading system. In Qur'an A.51, the copyist often provides reading options in the margins. For analytical purposes, I mark the surveyed texts in the body of this copy with 'T', and those placed in the margins as reading options

with ‘M’. Furthermore, when the copyist has not provided reading options in the margins, I mark it with ‘Nil’. I apply this system to all three Qur’ans, A.51, W.277 and RAS Arabic 4. However no reading options are provided in the latter two copies, indicating that the copyists of both Qur’ans intended to accommodate one reading system only (see Table 1).

Examination of the selected words in *Sūrat al-Kahf* from both Qur’ans A.51 and W.277 shows that, despite being written by the same hand, the two copies were meant to target different readers. When it comes to Qur’an A.51, the copyist clearly followed Nāfi’/Qālūn’s reading, which seems to have been uncommon among ordinary lay Banten Muslims at that time. The copyist then presented reading options in the margins, which mostly accord with the ‘Āṣim/Ḥafṣ reading. The identification of the same selected words in Qur’an W.277 reveals that the copyist (the same hand who produced Qur’an A.51) also copied the Qur’an based on the ‘Āṣim/Ḥafṣ reading. RAS Arabic 4, however, is different. Copied by a different hand, analysis of the same selected words in *Sūrat al-Kahf* supports Gallop’s (2022: 37) statement that its production was intended to accommodate a common recitation practice that follows ‘Āṣim’s reading as transmitted by Ḥafṣ. Despite uncertainties in the words *tazāwaru* and *thamarun* in verses 17 and 34 respectively, the way the copyist handled ‘Āṣim/Ḥafṣ’ reading as the basis for his copy of RAS Arabic 4 was more consistent than in Qur’an W.277. In addition, the copyist also changed the Basran numbering system applied in Qur’an W.277 (and also in Qur’an A.51) to follow the Kufan system, as will be elaborated below.

Variant verse divisions

Alongside *al-Taysīr*, one of al-Dānī’s most important works on the study of the Qur’an is his *al-Bayān fī ‘add āy al-Qur’ān*. In this, al-Dānī discusses the verse numbering systems that have, in many ways, become established norms when it comes to the placement of verse dividers in the body of the Qur’anic text. As explained earlier, the names used to identify these recognised systems refer to a number of the major urban centres of the early Islamic period. In *al-Bayān*, al-Dānī presents a comprehensive list of verse endings in each chapter of the Qur’an, according to the recognised traditions. Al-Dānī himself, according to Farrin (2019: 36), follows the Medinan II system.

In his discussion of *Sūrat al-Kahf*, al-Dānī (1994: 179–180) presents various differences in the number of verses attributed to this chapter according to the different traditions. Both the Medinan and Meccan systems count this chapter as comprising 105 verses, the Damascene 106 verses, the Kufan 110 verses and the Basran 111 verses (*wa-hiya mi’ah wa-khams āyāt fī al-Madanīyīn wa-al-Makkī, wa-sitt fī al-Shāmī, wa-‘ashara fī al-Kuḥfī wa-iḥḍā ‘ashrah fī al-Basrī*). Meanwhile, differences of placement over verse endings occur at 11 points, which can be summarised as follows:

- First, verse 13⁵: *wa-zidnāhum hudan*: the Damascene system does not count it, while the rest (Medinan I and II, Meccan, Kufan and Basran) do count it.
- Second, verse 22: *mā ya lamuhum illā qalīl*: only the Medinan II system counts this, while the rest (Medinan I, Meccan, Kufan, Damascene and Basran) do not.
- Third, verse 23: *innī fā’ilun dhālika ghadan*: only the Medinan II system does not count this, while the rest (Medinan I, Meccan, Kufan, Damascene and Basran) do.

⁵This numbering follows the Kufan system.

Table 1. Textual excerpts from *Sūrat al-Kahf* in the Qur'ans A.51, W.277 and RAS Arabic 4, showing a specific Qur'anic reading.

Qur'an A.51		Qur'an W.277		Quran RAS ARABIC 4	
V	Notes	V	Notes	V	Notes
16	T: marfaḡan M: mirfaḡan (Ḥafṣ)	16	T: mirfaḡan (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)	16	T: mirfaḡan (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)
17	T: tazẓawaru (Nāfi'/Qālūn) M: (Nil)	17	T: tazẓawaru (Nāfi'/Qālūn) M: (Nil)	17	T: tazẓawaru or tazẓawaru [?] M: (Nil)
17	T: fahwa al-muhtadī (Nāfi'/Qālūn) M: fa-huwa (Ḥafṣ)	17	T: fa-huwa al-muhtadi (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)	17	T: fa-huwa al-muhtadi (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)
18	T: taḥṣibuhum (Nāfi'/Qālūn) M: (Nil)	18	T: taḥṣibuhum (Nāfi'/Qālūn) M: (Nil)	18	T: taḥṣabuhum (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)
18	T: wa la mulli'ta (Nāfi'/Qālūn) M: wa-la muli'ta (Ḥafṣ)	18	T: wa-la muli'ta (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)	18	T: wa-la muli'ta (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)
33	T: ukulahā (Nāfi'/Qālūn) M: ukulahā (Ḥafṣ)	33	T: ukulahā (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)	33	T: ukulahā (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)
34	T: thumurun (Nāfi'/Qālūn) M: thumrun (Abū 'Amr/al-Dūrī), thamarun (Ḥafṣ)	34	T: thumurun (Nāfi'/Qālūn) M: (Nil)	34	T: thamarun or thumurun[?] M: (Nil)
34	T: anā aktharu (Nāfi'/Qālūn) M: ana (Ḥafṣ)	34	T: ana aktharu (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)	34	T: ana aktharu (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)
37	T: wahwa (Nāfi'/Qālūn) M: wa-huwa (Ḥafṣ)	37	T: wa-huwa (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)	37	T: wa-huwa (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)
39	T: anā aqalla (Nāfi'/Qālūn) M: ana (Ḥafṣ)	39	T: anā aqalla (Nāfi'/Qālūn) M: (Nil)	39	T: ana aqalla (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)
44	T: 'uqban (Nāfi'/Qālūn) M: 'uqban (Ḥafṣ)	44	T: 'uqban (Nāfi'/Qālūn) M: (Nil)	44	T: 'uqban (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)
55	T: qibalan (Nāfi'/Qālūn) M: qubulan (Ḥafṣ)	55	T: qubulan (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)	55	T: qubulan (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)
59	T: li-muḥlakihim (Nāfi'/Qālūn) M: li-mahlīkīhim (Ḥafṣ)	59	T: li-muḥlakihim (Nāfi'/ Qālūn) M: (Nil)	59	T: li-mahlīkīhim/li- mahlīkīhim M: (Nil)
69	T: satajiduniya (Nāfi'/Qālūn) M: satajidunī (Ḥafṣ)	67	T: satajidunī (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)	67	T: satajidunī (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)
70	T: tas'alannī (Nāfi'/Qālūn) M: tas'alnī (Ḥafṣ)	70	T: tas'alnī (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)	70	T: tas'alnī (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)
72	T: ma'ī (Nāfi'/Qālūn) M: ma'īya (Ḥafṣ)	72	T: ma'īya (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)	72	T: ma'īya (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)
76	T: min ladunī (Nāfi'/Qālūn) M: min ladunnī (Ḥafṣ)	76	T: min ladunnī (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)	76	T: min ladunnī (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)
81	T: yubaddiluhumā (Nāfi'/Qālūn) M: yubdiluhumā (Ḥafṣ)	81	T: yubaddiluhumā (Nāfi'/ Qālūn) M: (Nil)	81	T: yubdiluhumā (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)
85	T: fa-attaba'a (Nāfi'/Qālūn) M: fa-atba'a ('ayn)	85	T: fa-atba'a (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)	85	T: fa-atba'a (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)
88	T: jazā'un al-ḥusna or jazā'un al-ḥusnā (Nāfi'/Qālūn) M: jazā'an al-ḥusnā (Ḥafṣ)	88	T: jazā'un al-ḥusnā (Nāfi'/ Qālūn) M: (Nil)	88	T: jazā'an al-ḥusnā (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)
89	T: thumma attaba'a (Nāfi'/Qālūn) M: atba'a (Ḥafṣ)	89	T: thumma attaba'a (Nāfi'/ Qālūn) M: (Nil)	89	T: thumma atba'a (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)
93	T: al-suddayni (Nāfi'/Qālūn) M: al-saddayni (Ḥafṣ)	93	T: al-saddayni (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)	93	T: al-saddayni (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)
94	T: suddan (Nāfi'/Qālūn) M: saddan (Ḥafṣ)	94	T: suddan (Nāfi'/Qālūn) M: (Nil)	94	T: saddan (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)
94	T: Yājūj wa-Mājūj (Nāfi'/Qālūn) M: Ya'jūj wa-Ma'jūj (Ḥafṣ)	94	T: Ya'jūj wa-Ma'jūj M: (Nil)	94	T: Ya'jūj wa-Ma'jūj (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)
98	T: dakkan (Nāfi'/Qālūn) M: dakkā' (Ḥafṣ)	98	T: dakkan (Nāfi'/Qālūn) M: (Nil)	98	T: dakkā' (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)
102	T: dūniya (Nāfi'/Qālūn) M: dūnī (Ḥafṣ)	102	T: min dūnī (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)	102	T: min dūnī (Ḥafṣ) M: (Nil)

Source: excerpts from Qur'ans A.51 and W.277 are taken from Nurtawab (2020: 176).

- Fourth, verse 32: *wa-ja'alnā baynahumā zar'an*: the Medinan I and Meccan systems do not count it, while the rest (Medinan II, Kufan, Damascene and Basran) count it.
- Fifth, verse 35: *an tabīda hādhihi abadan*: Medinan II and Damascene do not count it, while the rest (Medinan I, Meccan, Kufan, and Basran) do.
- Sixth, verse 84: *min kulli shay'in sababan*: Medinan I and Meccan do not count it, while the rest (Medinan II, Basran, Damascene, and Kufan) count it.
- Seventh to ninth, verses 85 and 89: *fa-atba'a sababan* and *thumma atba'a sababan*; then at verse 92: *thumma atba'a sababan*: the Kufan and Basran systems count these, while the rest (Medinan I, Medinan II, Damascene, and Meccan) do not.
- Tenth, verse 86: *'indahā qawman*: the Kufan and Medinan II systems do not count it, while the rest (Medinan I, Meccan, Damascene, and Basran) count it.
- The last, verse 103: *bi al-akhsarīn a'mālan*: the Medinan I, Medinan II, and Meccan systems do not count it, while the rest (Kufan, Damascene and Basran) count it (cf. Mūsá 1988: 100-104).

Al-Dānī (1994: 179) also lists a number of points that look as if they are verse ending (*fawāṣil*) but are not counted as such according to the recognised conventions. These are located in five places. The first is at verse 2: *ba'san shadīdan*; the second is at verse 15: *bi-sultān bayyin*; the third is at verse 21: *'alayhim bunyānan*; the fourth is at verse 22: *mirā'an zāhīran*, and the last is at verse 33: *wa-lam tazlim minhu shay'an*.

We can now contextualise the above elaboration to see what the three Banten Qur'ans being studied here can tell us when it comes to their own application of verse numbering systems. Qur'an A.51 provides the most detailed information on differences in the number of verses in *Sūrat al-Kahf*, as indicated in the notes placed in the margin of the beginning of the chapter. The copyist here decided to choose the number of verses that conforms to the Basran system, that is 111 verses. However, when observing the actual roundels, we count only 105 roundels (exclusive of one roundel at the end of the *Basmalla* verse) which is more reflective of either the Meccan or Medinan system.

A different reality can be clearly seen in the placement of roundels in *Sūrat al-Kahf* in Qur'an W.277. The copyist presents the number of verses in the chapter heading as 111, apparently following the same verse numbering system as Qur'an A.51. It is, however, evident that the copyist inserted more roundel verse markers than can be accounted for in any of the recognised traditions. The total number of verse markers he includes comes to 119 roundels, exclusive of one further roundel at the end of the *Basmalla* verse. This seems to have attracted the attention of either the same copyist or another hand, which then tried to correct and recalculate the verse endings by putting numerals in the margins along with the relevant roundels (see Appendices A and B).

As can be seen in Appendix B, eight roundels can be identified in the margins of Qur'an W.277 that do not have numerals, indicating that the recalculation excluded them from functioning as verse dividers. Despite the fact that the actual numerals found in the margins only come to 110, this recalculation stopped at verse 109 in the Kufan system. The last identified roundel in the last verse of *Sūrat al-Kahf*, that is verse 111 in the Basran system, does not have an associated numeral, which leads to the assumption that whoever appended the text with numerals stopped because they had confirmed that their recalculation successfully accorded with the number of verses presented in the chapter heading, that is 111 verses. Meanwhile, Qur'an RAS Arabic 4

solidly conforms to the ‘Āṣim/Hafṣ reading system, and the chapter heading cites the number of verses accorded by the Kufan system. The actual identified verse markers however total only 103 roundels.

The text of *Sūrat al-Kahf* as presented in these three Qur’ans has two other interesting factors. The first is related to the way the words *illā qalīl* are counted. Of the recognised counting traditions, only the Medinan II system counts this phrase as a verse. Both W.277 and RAS Arabic 4 placed roundels after the words *illā qalīl*, as R22 and R21 respectively, but neither W.277 nor RAS Arabic 4 in general follow a verse counting system that corresponds to Medinan II. In contrast, Qur’an A.51, which seems to be closer to Medinan II in terms of where verse markers are placed in *Sūrat al-Kahf*, does not have a roundel following these words (see Appendix B).

The second point relates to a cluster of 10 verses, verses 81–90 according to the Kufan system, which appears to be the area where there the recognised verse-counting systems show the most noticeable level of disagreement. In this regard, RAS Arabic 4 seems to follow the Medinan I and Meccan systems most closely, by eliminating the roundel at the word *dhikran* (Q18:83); however, a roundel is also placed at the word *al-ḥusnā* which is not recognised in any of the canonical traditions. Meanwhile, Qur’an A.51 follows the Medinan II system faithfully. But for Qur’an W.277, the copyist inserts 10 roundels, the same number as is found in the Kufan system. However, the textual boundaries of the cluster of 10 verses indicated by the placement of the roundels in this segment of W.277 perfectly conforms to the Basran system, rather than the Kufan (see Figures 1, 2 and 3; Appendix B).

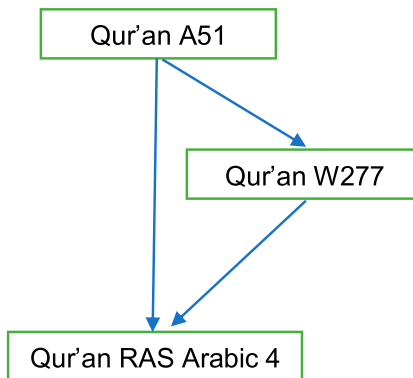


Figure 1. Cluster of verses 81–90 in Qur’an A.51. Photo: courtesy of the National Library of the Republic of Indonesia (PNRI), 2014.



Figure 2. Cluster of verses 81–90 in Qur’an W.277. Numerals in red ink are found in the margins alongside roundels in the body text. Photo: courtesy of the National Library of the Republic of Indonesia (PNRI), 2014.

Table 2. Stemma for Qur’ans A51, W277 and RAS Arabic 4.



Considering the evidence relating to applied reading systems and verse divisions in the analysis above, we can now propose a stemma chart of how these particular three Qur’ans are connected to one another (Table 2). I am inclined to conclude that Qur’an RAS Arabic 4 may have been the final copy to have been made, and that it



Figure 3. Cluster of verses 81–90 in Qur’an RAS Arabic 4. Photo: courtesy of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 2022.

was undertaken with consideration of the two other, earlier copies of the Qur’an. During the copying process, the copyist of this Qur’an seems to have taken Qur’an A.51 as the primary reference, while taking the existence of Qur’an W.277 into account. The fact that attempts were made to change the norms of the established reading systems in both Qur’ans W.277 and RAS Arabic 4 gives us an idea of the relationship between the transmission and copying of Qur’anic texts and developments in existing *qirā’at* scholarship in 18th-century Banten, and shows that some Qur’ans were not merely the product of textual transmission based on memory or the verbatim reproduction of older copies. The text in W.277 and RAS Arabic 4 seems to reflect the popular ‘Āṣim/Ḥafṣ’ reading that is commonly used by lay Muslims, and no other reading options are found in either copy. A different purpose is indicated by the information on reading systems and verse divisions provided in Qur’an A.51, which seems to have targeted advanced readers, displaying a variety of information in the margins about reading options that is mostly based on the ‘Āṣim/Ḥafṣ’ *qirā’a*.

A contrasting situation is seen when one looks instead at the applied verse numbering system. Despite being copied in conformation with the ‘Āṣim/Ḥafṣ’ reading, the number of verses as indicated in the chapter heading of *Sūrat al-Kahf* in Qur’an W.277 coincides with that of Qur’an A.51, that is, they both cite the chapter as containing 111 verses, a total that conforms to the Basran calculation. This conclusion is supported by the addition of numerals in the margins of Qur’an W.277 that were apparently intended

to confirm that the placement of roundels accorded with the number of verses presented in the chapter heading. Conversely, RAS Arabic 4 which presents the number of verses according to the Kufan system, and differs in this from A.51 and W.277, actually contains verse dividers that are closer in number to that of A.51 than those found in W.277.

Last but not least, we can apply this discussion to a broader context in the history of the Qur'an. Farrin (2019) notes that, politically speaking, the Umayyad dynasty clearly supported the application of the Basran system in the Qur'ans that their scholars produced. Meanwhile, the Kufan system for centuries enjoyed the endorsement of Abbasid rulers, and this system continued to be dominant during the Ottoman period. This picture is complicated by the fact that Qur'ans A.51, W.277 and RAS Arabic 4 show diversities in the ways in which verse divisions were placed. While some roundels clearly show idiosyncrasies, the placement of roundels that do not merely follow either the Basran or Kufan systems gives us a strong hint that awareness of *qirā'āt* literature might have played a role in the production of certain Qur'ans in 18th-century Banten.

Concluding remarks

Studies on the Qur'an in the Southeast Asian context have successfully identified a number of culturally based characteristics of these manuscripts by way of analysing the distinctive aspects of their illumination and decorative elements. Examination of a group of Qur'an manuscripts produced in a specific region can also demonstrate the textual relationships that occur within specific manuscript traditions, and the extent to which a specific, localised Qur'an tradition developed. These relationships can be seen, for example, in the ways that copyists used specific systems when copying Qur'ans. The existence of various applied reading systems in particular Qur'an copies casts light on the development of Islamic scholarship and scribal agency in the production of these texts. While copying the Qur'an was usually an exact and careful process, it is still common to find inconsistencies in the application of the intended Qur'anic reading system and in the marking of verse divisions. This is an aspect of the Qur'anic manuscript tradition that has received a great deal of critical attention from scholars working on the history of the Qur'an, and is highlighted in studies of early developments in the written forms of the Qur'an. I suggest that this method of textual criticism remains useful for us when we are looking at later developments in the textual transmission of the Qur'an throughout the Islamic world, especially in Southeast Asia where the earliest extant examples of the Qur'an come from the early 17th century.

In this article, I have examined the textual relationships between Qur'ans A.51, W.277 and RAS Arabic 4. Analysis of these three Qur'ans from 18th-century Banten shows an attempt on the part of their copyists to change the Qur'anic reading system that served as the norm. This indicates that they had adopted a method of copying the Qur'an that relied on awareness of the variant *qirā'āt* in the existing Qur'anic manuscript tradition, long before scholars at al-Azhar university used this method to produce the Egyptian standard Qur'an in the 1920s. As for the actual implementation of verse numbering systems, the copyists of these Qur'ans seemed to have applied syncretic systems of verse dividers, which in some cases demonstrate idiosyncrasies. Despite these inconsistencies, patterns in the placement of verse markers in the observed Qur'ans show that their scribes undoubtedly based their copies on older manuscripts. In the case of the Qur'an W.277, I have also

identified an apparent attempt to verify the number of verse markers used in one particular chapter of the Qur'an through the use of numerals in the margins.

The inconsistencies or inaccuracies found in these three Qur'ans do not negate the fact that it is evident that an understanding of the science of *qirā'āt* has been an important element of these copying projects. This might provide an illustration of the ways in which, as Cook (2004: 98) notes, 'texts start right and become corrupted as they are copied'. Alternatively, flexible rules for copying the Qur'an may have been applied. As can be seen in the three Banten Qur'ans studied here, I have identified the thoughtful and complex range of considerations employed by the copyists even at subsequent chronological stages of the copying process, which could even lead to an improvement rather than corruption. I therefore argue that the ways these three Qur'ans, A.51, W.277 and RAS Arabic 4, were copied resulted from their adoption of a combination of methods found in the earlier copies they consulted, the memories of the copyists themselves, and the extent of their familiarity with and understanding of the science of *qirā'āt*.

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Appendix A. Information in the chapter headings of *Sūrat al-Kahf* in Qur'ans A.51, W.277 and RAS Arabic 4.

Qur'an A.51

[CHAPTER HEADING] *Sūrat al-Kahf Makkīyah wa-hiya mi'ah wa-iḥḍa 'ashara āyāt* [111]
 [MARGIN] *Makkīyah bi-la khilāf wa-hiya mi'ah wa-khams āyāt fi al-Madaniyīn wa-al-Makki*
 [105] *wa-sitt fi al-Shāmī* [106] *wa-'ashara fi al-Kūfī* [110] *wa-iḥḍa 'ashara fi al-Basrī* [111]

Translation:

[CHAPTER HEADING] *Sūrat al-Kahf*, Meccan, and it [comprises] 111 verses
 [MARGIN] *Sūrat al-Kahf*, Meccan, and it [contains] 111 verses Meccan without dispute and 105 verses in < the counting systems of > Medinan and Meccan and <10 > 6 in Damascene and <1 > 10 in Kufan and <1 > 11 in Basran

Qur'an W.277

[CHAPTER HEADING] *Sūrat al-Kahf Makkīyah wa-hiya mi'ah wa-iḥḍa 'ashara āyāt* [111]
Makkīyah

Translation:

[CHAPTER HEADING] *Sūrat al-Kahf*, Meccan and it [contains] 111 verses, Meccan

Qur'an RAS Arabic 04

[CHAPTER HEADING] *Sūrat al-Kahf Makkīyah wa-hiya mi'ah wa-'ashara āyāt* [110]

Translation:

[CHAPTER HEADING] *Sūrat al-Kahf*, Meccan, and it [contains] 110 verses

Appendix B. Verse divisions in *Sūrat al-Kahf* based on the Kufan system and those found in Qurans A.51, W.277 and RAS Arabic 04.

No.	Kufan system		A51		W277		RAS 04	
	R	Ends of verse	R ¹	Ends of verse	R ³	Ends of verse	R	Ends of verse
1	-	... al-rahīm	0 ²	... al-rahīm	0 ²	... al-rahīm	0	... al-rahīm
2	1	... ʿiwajan	1	... ʿiwajan	[1] ⁴	... ʿiwajan	1	... al-muʿminin
3	2	... hasanan	2	... abadan	[2] ⁵	... hasanan	2 ⁷	... hasanan
4	3	... abadan	3	... kadhīban	3	... abadan	3	... abadan
5	4	... waladan	4	... asafan	4	... waladan	4	... waladan
6	5	... kadhīban	5	... ʿamalan	5	... kadhīban	5	... kadhīban
7	6	... asafan	6	... juruzan	6	... asafan	6	... asafan
8	7	... ʿamalan	7	... ʿajaban	7	... ʿamalan	7	... ʿamalan
9	8	... juruzan	8	... rashadan	8	... juruzan	8	... ʿajaban
10	9	... ʿajaban	9	... ʿadadan	9	... ʿajaban	9	... rashadan
11	10	... rashadan	10	... amadan	10	... rashadan	10	... ʿadadan
12	11	... ʿadadan	11	... hudan	11	... ʿadadan	11	... amadan
13	12	... amadan	12	... shatatan	12	... amadan	12	... hudan
14	13	... hudan	13	... kadhīban	13	... hudan	13	... shatatan
15	14	... shatatan	14	... marfaqan	14	... shatatan	14	... kadhīban
16	15	... kadhīban	15	... murshidan	15	... kadhīban	15	... mirfaqan
17	16	... mirfaqan	16	... ruʿban	16	... mirfaqan	16	... murshidan
18	17	... murshidan	17	... aḥadan	17	... murshidan	17	... bi-al-waṣīd
19	18	... ruʿban	18	... abadan	18	... ruʿban	18	... aḥadan
20	19	... aḥadan	19	... masjidan	-	... yawm	19	... abadan
21	20	... abadan	20	... aḥadan	19	... aḥadan	20	... masjidan
22	21	... masjidan	21	... rashadan	20	... abadan	21	... illā qalīlun
23	22	... aḥadan	22	... tisʿan	21	... masjidan	22	... aḥadan
24	23	... ghadan	23	... aḥadan	22	... qalīlun	23	... rashadan
25	24	... rashadan	24	... multahadan	23	... aḥadan	24	... tisʿan
26	25	... tisʿan	25	... furutan	-	... ghadan	25	... aḥadan
27	26	... aḥadan	26	... murtafaqan	24	... rashadan	26	... multahadan
28	27	... multahadan	27	... ʿamalan	25	... tisʿan	27	... furutan
29	28	... furutan	28	... murtafaqan	26	... aḥadan	28	... murtafaqan
30	29	... murtafaqan	29	... zarʿan	27	... multahadan	29	... ʿamalan
31	30	... ʿamalan	30	... naharan	28	... furutan	30	... murtafaqan
32	31	... murtafaqan	31	... nafaran	-	... nāran	31	... naharan
33	32	... zarʿan	32	... abadan	29	... murtafaqan	32	... nafaran
34	33	... naharan	33	... munqalaban	30	... ʿamalan	33	... abadan
35	34	... nafaran	34	... rajulan	31	... murtafaqan	34	... munqalaban
36	35	... abadan	35	... aḥadan	-	... zarʿan	35	... rajulan
37	36	... munqalaban	36	... wa-waladan	32	... shayʿan	36	... aḥadan
38	37	... rajulan	37	... zalaqan	-	... naharan	37	... wa-waladan
39	38	... aḥadan	38	... ṭalaban	33	... nafaran	38	... zalaqan
40	39	... wa-waladan	39	... aḥadan	34	... abadan	39	... aḥadan
41	40	... zalaqan	40	... muntaṣiran	35	... munqalaban	40	... muntaṣiran
42	41	... ṭalaban	41	... ʿuqban	36	... rajulan	41	... ʿuqban
43	42	... aḥadan	42	... muqtadiran	37	... aḥadan	42	... muqtadiran
44	43	... muntaṣiran	43	... amalan	38	... wa-waladan	43	... amalan
45	44	... ʿuqban	44	... aḥadan	39	... zalaqan	44	... aḥadan
46	45	... muqtadiran	45	... mawʿidan	40	... ṭalaban	45	... mawʿidan
47	46	... amalan	46	... aḥadan	41	... aḥadan	46	... aḥadan
48	47	... aḥadan	47	... badalan	42	... muntaṣiran	47	... badalan
49	48	... mawʿidan	48	... aḥadan	43	... ʿuqban	48	... aḥadan
50	49	... aḥadan	49	... mawbiqan	44	... muqtadiran	49	... maṣrifan
51	50	... badalan	50	... maṣrifan	45	... amalan	50	... jadalān
52	51	... aḥadan	51	... jadalān	46	... aḥadan	51	... qubulan
53	52	... mawbiqan	52	... qibalan	47	... mawʿidan	52	... huzuwan
54	53	... maṣrifan	53	... huzuʿan	48	... aḥadan	53	... waqran
55	54	... jadalān	54	... waqran	49	... badalan	54	... abadan
56	55	... qubulan	55	... abadan	50	... aḥadan	55	... mawʿilan
57	56	... huzuwan	56	... mawʿilan	51	... mawbiqan	56	... mawʿidan

(Continued)

Continued.

No.	Kufan system		A51		W277		RAS 04	
	R	Ends of verse	R ¹	Ends of verse	R ³	Ends of verse	R	Ends of verse
58	57	... abadan	57	... maw ^ʿ idan	52	... maşrifan	57	... huquban
59	58	... maw'ılan	58	... huquban	53	... jadalán	58	... saraban
60	59	... maw ^ʿ idan	59	... saraban	-	... al-awwalin	59	... naşaban
61	60	... huquban	60	... naşaban	54	... qubulan	60	... ʿajaban
62	61	... saraban	61	... ʿajaban	55	... huzu'an	61	... qaşaşan
63	62	... naşaban	62	... qaşaşan	56	... waqran	62	... ʿilman
64	63	... ʿajaban	63	... ʿilman	57	... abadan	63	... rushdan
65	64	... qaşaşan	64	... rushdan	58	... maw'ılan	64	... khubran
66	65	... ʿilman	65	... şabran	59	... maw ^ʿ idan	65	... amran
67	66	... rushdan	66	... khubran	60	... huquban	66	... dhikran
68	67	... şabran	67	... amran	61	... saraban	67	... imran
69	68	... khubran	68	... dhikran	62	... naşaban	68	... şabran
70	69	... laka amran	69	... imran	63	... ʿajaban	69	... ʿusran
71	70	... dhikran	70	... şabran	64	... qaşaşan	70	... nukran
72	71	... imran	71	... ʿusran	65	... ʿilman	71	... şabran
73	72	... şabran	72	... nukran	66	... rushdan	72	... ʿudhran
74	73	... ʿusran	73	... şabran	67	... şabran	73	... ajran
75	74	... nukran	74	... ʿudhran	68	... khubran	74	... şabran
76	75	... şabran	75	... ajran	69	... amran	75	... ghaşban
77	76	... ʿudhran	76	... şabran	70	... dhikran	76	... ruħman
78	77	... ajran	77	... ghaşban	71	... imran	77	... şabran
79	78	... şabran	78	... wa-kufrán	72	... şabran	78	... qawman
80	79	... ghaşban	79	... ruħman	73	... ʿusran	79	... ħusnan
81	80	... wa-kufrán	80	... şabran	74	... nukran	80	... nukran
82	81	... ruħman	81	... dhikran	75	... şabran	81 ⁸	... al-ħusna
83	82	... şabran	82	... sababan	76	... ʿudhran	82	... yusran
84	83	... dhikran	83	... ħusnan	77	... ajran	83	... sittran
85	84	... sababan	84	... nukran	78	... şabran	84	... khubran
86	85	... sababan	85	... yusran	79	... ghaşban	85	... qawman
87	86	... ħusnan	86	... sittran	80	... wa-kufrán	86	... qawlan
88	87	... nukran	87	... khubran	81	... ruħman	87	... saddan
89	88	... yusran	88	... qawlan	82	... şabran	88	... radman
90	89	... sababan	89	... suddan	83	... dhikran	89	... qiṭran
91	90	... sittran	90	... radman	84	... sababan	90	... naqban
92	91	... khubran	91	... qiṭran	85	... qawman	91	... ħaqqan
93	92	... sababan	92	... naqban	86	... ħusnan	92	... jam ^ʿ an
94	93	... qawlan	93	... ħaqqan	87	... nukran	93	... ʿarḡan
95	94	... saddan	94	... jam ^ʿ an	88	... yusran	94	... sam ^ʿ an
96	95	... radman	95	... ʿarḡan	89	... sababan	95	... nuzulan
97	96	... qiṭran	96	... sam ^ʿ an	90	... sitran	96	... a ^ʿ mālan
98	97	... naqban	97	... nuzulan	91	... khubran	97	... şun ^ʿ an
99	98	... ħaqqan	98	... a ^ʿ mālan	92	... sababan	98	... waznan
100	99	... jam ^ʿ an	99	... şun ^ʿ an	-	... qawman	99	... huzuwan
101	100	... ʿarḡan	100	... waznan	93	... qawlan	100	... nuzulan
102	101	... sam ^ʿ an	101	... huzu'an	94	... suddan	101	... ħiwalan
103	102	... nuzulan	102	... nuzulan	95	... radman	102	... madadan
104	103	... a ^ʿ mālan	103	... ħiwalan	-	... nāran	103	... aħadan
105	104	... şun ^ʿ an	104	... madadan	96	... qiṭran		
106	105	... waznan	105	... aħadan	97	... naqban		
107	106	... huzuwan			98	... min rabbi		
108	107	... nuzulan			99	... ħaqqan		
109	108	... ħiwalan			100	... jam ^ʿ an		
110	109	... madadan			101	... ʿarḡan		
111	110	... ahadan			102	... sam ^ʿ an		
112					103	... nuzulan		
113					104	... a ^ʿ mālan		
114					105	... şun ^ʿ an		
115					106	... waznan		
116					107	... huzuwan		
117					108	... nuzulan		

(Continued)

Continued.

No.	Kufan system		R ¹	A51	R ³	W277	R	RAS 04
	R	Ends of verse		Ends of verse		Ends of verse		Ends of verse
118					109	... hiwalan		
119					110	... madadan		
120					[111] ⁶	... ahadan		

General notes

¹R is used to denote roundels indicating the ends of verses. I count them based on the actual roundels in black ink. They are usually – but not always – filled with a full gold colour in Qurans A51 and RAS Arabic 4.

²In some Southeast Asian Qur'an manuscripts, the same roundel functioning as a verse divider is found at the end of the *Basmalla* verse. However, it appears to me more an aesthetic feature than an indication of numbering. In this regard, I record the roundel, but do not count the *Basmalla* as verse.

Specific notes

³I count the verses based on the actual roundel symbols written in red ink with additional numerals in the margin of chapter 18 of Quran W.277. I do not count the roundels as indicating verse endings when they are not supported by numerals in the margin, with the exception of the first two verses and the final verse.

⁴The roundel is very small, my assumption is that it was implemented by the copyist to show the end of the verse but that, due to a lack of space, the copyist made it very small.

⁵The actual roundel is placed after the word *ajran*, and no accompanying numeral has been written in the margin. I identify this roundel as verse 2 on the grounds that there is a numeral '3' in the margin for the following roundel.

⁶There is no actual numeral in the margin. As in the case of the first two numbers above, I assume that the scribe simply forgot to include the last number, that is 111, as this verse clearly constitutes the last verse of *Sūrat al-Kahf*.

⁷The roundel is not coloured, indicating that the copyist seemed to have realised that this is not the end of verse. Or, it might indicate that the colouring of the roundels is undertaken once all or some roundels were made, and it was forgotten for this part.

⁸This roundel is not filled with colour.