

The Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC)

announces a Lecture

by

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The British Library

**Illuminating the Word:
The Art of the Qur'an in Southeast Asia**

The Islamic world of maritime Southeast Asia covers the present-day territories of Indonesia (home to more Muslims than any other country in the world), Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei; the southern parts of Thailand and the Philippines; and the Cham enclaves in southern Cambodia and Vietnam. Although hundreds of different ethnic groups and languages are found in this region, it is often referred to as 'the Malay world' due to cultural affinities rooted in the shared faith of Islam and the use of the Malay language as a *lingua franca*.

A survey of Qur'an manuscripts from the Malay world of Southeast Asia has revealed the existence of a number of clearly-defined regional artistic schools, notably in Aceh on the northern tip of the island of Sumatra; on the east coast of the Malay peninsula in the states of Terengganu, Kelantan and Patani; at various centres in Java; and in areas associated with diaspora communities from south Sulawesi. In studying these Qur'an manuscripts, it has been found that internal decorative features such as text frames, *ayah* markers, *surah* headings and marginal ornaments for textual divisions can be as indicative of regional origin as the sumptuous double decorated frames found at the start of the text and other key locations.

This lecture will identify the main regional styles of Qur'anic art in Southeast Asia, and highlight areas in which further research is still needed.



Illuminated frames around the final pages of a Qur'an from Aceh, early 19th century.
British Library, Or.16915, ff.254v-255r.

Thursday, 6 November 2014 at 6 pm

Room 0001, CSMC