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Many greetings from Madura; An exercise in eighteenth century codicology

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On Tuesday, 29 May 1777, Natakusuma of Sumenep on Madura wrote a letter to Van Setten in Batavia, to tell him that his children were well again. Because Natakusuma’s letter has been preserved, we can find out something more about literacy in a certain area of the Indonesian archipelago in the latter half of the eighteenth century.

Natakusuma wrote in Javanese, in Javanese characters, on European paper. How common was it for a Madurese nobleman in 1777 to use European-made paper and to correspond with a European? What does the letter tell us about its sender and addressee and the nature of their contact? Can we say something more about the script of the letter beyond its being ‘Javanese’: does it represent a particular type, to be connected with a certain time and place or with a certain environment; what position does it occupy in the history of Javanese script?

Unfortunately our knowledge in the field of Indonesian codicology and palaeography is next to nothing; for the time being there are more questions than answers, even at the most general level. This is not because sources are lacking, even for the eighteenth century, but because so little research has been done until now. Paper, for example, has only recently begun to be studied in a systematic way by Russell Jones, who has addressed such problems as the lapse of time between the manufacture of paper and its actual use (Jones 1988). But a survey of watermarks found in Indonesian manuscripts does not yet exist, and will surely take many more years if it is to be prepared by a single person. Sometimes the learned insights raise new questions instead of answering the old ones. De Casparis, in his treatise on the history of writing in Indonesia, states that there is only one type of Javanese script after 1500; Pigeaud distinguishes more than a hundred.1

1 De Casparis 1975:61: ‘ [...] until the end of the sixteenth century or later. By that time, however, the script in Java had already developed into its typically
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In this article I want to present a description of Natakusuma’s letter, as an illustration of the difficulties we can expect given the present state of affairs. Quite apart from its seemingly unimpressive contents, the letter is useful as a starting point for such a description because it mentions a date and the name of a place. Following Hellinga and Vermeeren (1961-1966/1967), I will first discuss the document as it presents itself without text, that is its paper and ruling, then the aspects which come with the text: script, lay-out, completed letter. I begin with a discussion of the history of the letter, including its present state. The Appendix contains a photocopy of the letter, together with a transliteration and translation of the text.

2. Origin

The author of the letter, Raden Arya Tumenggung Natakusuma, was born in 1741 in Limbur on the island of Madura. He succeeded his father in 1762 as the regent of Sumenep; the panembahan of Madura was his father-in-law. He revealed himself in his administration as a weak personality, reportedly becoming addicted to opium, and his reputation of being a pious Muslim raised suspicion among the Dutch. Nevertheless he enjoyed the support of the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie until the end of his life. He was without doubt the richest administrator of the whole island. In 1776 he was given the title of pangeran by Batavia. About 1799 he was temporarily removed from office on the grounds of senility. He died in 1812.

The letter is addressed to one ‘budho fan Setah’. I presume that this is Hendrik van Setten, who stayed from 1773 until 1778 in the East Indies, not in the service of the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie but as a common citizen. He earned his living as a bailiff (Dutch: boed) to the board of aldermen for the surrounding territory of Batavia and, for the first two years, also as the warden of the municipal jail. Consequently, he belonged to the lower circles of Batavian society; my source of information classifies him among the ‘mindere burgerlijke bedienden’ (lesser civil servants, Naamboek [s.a.]:26).

modern Javanese form and from then on till the present time it underwent only minor stylistic modifications. Pigeaud inter alia in 1967-1970, II: passim.
2 I have not found the year 1741 anywhere, but in 1765 he was 24 years old (De Jonge 1883:26).
3 This information can be found in the transfer statements of the successive governors and directors of Java’s Northeast Coast – Van Ossenbergh, Van den Burgh, Siberg and Engelhard (De Jonge 1883:26, 443; De Jonge 1884:114-115; De Jonge 1888:155-156) and the article ‘Madoera’ in the Encylopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indie. Hageman provides us with slightly different information: he has Natakusuma succeed his father in 1768 as Raden Tumenggung Tirtanagara II and in the same year he promoted to Pangeran Natakusuma (Hageman 1858:334; he does not mention his source).
4 Naamboek [s.a.]:27, Naamboek [s.a.]:b:27, Naamboek [s.a.]:c:117. The year 1773 is the first year Van Setten’s name appears in these Naamboeken.
From the letter it appears that Natakusuma and Van Setten were quite close: Van Setten’s wife is mentioned, the illness of Natakusuma’s children, Van Setten’s sympathetic involvement. How did they know each other? What did Natakusuma, a member of the upper class of the indigenous society, have in common with a lower class fellow like Van Setten? Did Van Setten perhaps know Javanese (if so, where did he learn it)? Natakusuma had presumably been in Batavia at least once: in 1776, when the title of *pangeran* was bestowed upon him. I do not know whether a bailiff of the court would have played a role in that visit, but it does not seem very likely. As for Van Setten’s possible knowledge of Javanese, the Dutch of his days are not remembered for their eager study of Indonesian languages, but if Van Setten knew Javanese, that in itself may have been precisely the reason why he would have been involved, although at the same time there was an official interpreter for Javanese. The board of aldermen had two bailiffs working for it, one for the community inside the walls and one for the outer districts. Van Setten, being assigned the outer districts, may have had contacts with the Javanese community who in those days, in accordance with the regulations, had their living quarters outside the walls. Van Setten might of course have known Javanese well if he had been born on Java, but I do not think that this was the case, since after resigning he left for Holland (*Naamboek* [s.a.]c:117).

The letter is dated ‘tanggal 18 sasi Rabiulakher taun Dal angkani warsa 1703’. The Dal year 1703 of the Javano-Muslim calendar began on Monday, 10 February 1777 AD, so the eighteenth day of the fourth month fell on Tuesday, 29 May 1777.\(^5\)

How is it possible that such an insignificant letter like Natakusuma’s has survived more than two hundred years? Virtually nothing is known about its history. The letter is currently in a bundle of documents owned by drs H. Borkent of Oegstgeest; information about the origins of the bundle does not reach back further than a few years, when it was bought at the former antiquarian bookshop of Van der Peet in Amsterdam. The collection consists of slightly over two hundred documents of varying character, held together by a cardboard wrapper. Most of the documents are handwritten letters in Javanese and Malay; there are a number of facsimiles of Javanese letters, and one or two printed and typed documents. The dates of the letters cover a period of about one century, from the end of the eighteenth until the end of the nineteenth century. Natakusuma’s letter is the only one from the eighteenth century; of the nineteenth-century letters by far the greater part consists of official correspondence between Javanese and Dutch officials about the middle of the nineteenth century, from Central Java as well as from various towns in the central and eastern districts along the north coast.

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\(^5\) *Encyclopaedie* vol. V s.v. ‘Tijdrekening’. The article gives me the freedom to choose between Sunday 9 and Monday 10 February as the first day of 1777 AD; as 1776 was a leap year, I opt for Monday the 10th.
of Java. I do not see any coherence in the bundle as a whole; it is possible that smaller parts of it belonged together and were lumped together not long ago with what seemed to be similar things by a second-hand bookseller.

The document of Natakusuma did not survive the ages without damage, particularly as regards the paper. The text happens to have remained almost completely intact. The back page of the folded sheet is worn to such an extent that the upper left corner has disappeared, while the remaining piece is much darker along the right-hand side than the rest of the page, and the other pages. See Fig. 1.

![Fig. 1. Wear on folio 2 verso side.](image)

There is some slight damage along the edges, giving the impression that at one time the letter may have been stored in a folder or binder. The surface is marked by folds, which in their turn have furthered the process of deterioration. See Fig. 2.

The lines of Fig. 2 have to be interpreted as follows: the sheet was folded along line A, so that B and C coincided, then the sheet was folded again along B/C, finally along D.
3. The paper

The letter is written on the first page of a sheet of hand-made paper, folded once. Usually, descriptions of Javanese material—and, for that matter, of Indonesian material in general—are limited to the outward appearance of watermarks, which can then either be looked up in the well-known watermark repositories or, more often, have to await further identification. According to the manuals, however, this procedure is not precise enough, due to such problems as the gradual deformation of the watermark on the sieve. To avoid the risk of wrong identifications, one has to take into account not only the form of a watermark but also its exact position on the sieve as well as the pattern of the chain and laid lines. One has to make clear the exact position of the knots where the watermark has been sewn to the mould, and even to tell from which side of the paper one has been looking at it, from the side which faced the sieve or from the other side (‘zugewandt’ and ‘abgewandt’ or Z and A respectively; Gerardy 1980:41-43).

In fact, the idea of such a detailed description is not completely new in the field of Indonesian studies. Jones, in an article on the codicological description of Malay manuscripts, proposed it as early as 1974. But so far I
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have not seen any reflection of this proposal in print. Mulyadi, who has a keen interest in watermarks, does not pay attention to it (Jones 1974:49; Mulyadi 1983).

When not folded, the sheet measures 31.8 by 40.8 cm. To decide on the A or Z side, a matter of interpreting the surface of the paper, is in the case of Natakusuma's letter hampered by the age of the paper, or perhaps I should say by my lack of experience. A way out would seem to be the orientation of the watermark, as there happen to be some characters in it, but the manuals are silent about this. Only Gaskell provides the information that watermarks as a rule were tied in mirror image to the moulds ([1985]: 61). If he is right, then the following description is based on the Z side.

The chain lines run vertically at a distance of 2.4 cm from each other. Shade lines are clearly visible. The space between chain line and paper edge is 2.03 cm on the left and 2 cm on the right side. Between each of the two extreme chain lines and the edges of the paper there is an extra chain line, 0.5 cm from the edge on the left and 0.7 cm from the edge on the right side.

There are 9 laid lines to the centimetre.

The sheet contains both a watermark and a countermark. The main mark, which is in the right half of the paper, has the form of a crowned circular surround containing the motto 'PRO PATRIA EUSQUE LIBERTATE'; inside the circular surround is a lion, standing over the word 'VRYHEYT' and holding a staff with a hat on top. Under the surround the name 'VAN DER LEY' is written.

The countermark consists of the characters 'GR' with a crown over them. 'GR' stands for Georgius Rex or Guillaume Rex; these are the 'royal ciphers' with which the Dutch papermakers of the eighteenth century used to mark their paper, originally in view of export to England but later to virtually anywhere (Voorn [1960]:120-121). For the distances between the two marks and between the marks and the edge of the sheet the reader is referred to Fig. 3.6 The same diagram also shows the position of the marks in relation to the chain lines. For the sake of clarity I have left these figures out of the diagram but I give them here: the main mark lies 1.5 cm off the two nearest chain lines, on both sides, while each of the three components of the name 'VAN DER LEY' lie precisely between the surrounding chain lines. The characters 'GR' touch the surrounding chain lines to the extent that the R sticks out 0.2 cm, and the G 0.3 cm. The height of the characters

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6 This picture is meant merely to give an impression of the situation. A faithful representation should of course be made by photographic means with the help of beta rays, a field in which I have no experience. Recently, good results have been reported by Offenberg on experiments with X-rays. It was suggested in the same article that X-raying is to be preferred over beta radiation, for reasons of environmental protection (the radio active material seems to have to be replaced after some ten years already, as it has lost its utility by then. See Offenberg 1992: 7). I wonder, though, whether a photographic reproduction can ever replace a detailed description.
is in the first case 0.6 cm (the capitals 0.9) and in the second case 1.4 cm. No dots, representing the stitches which tie the watermark to the mould, are visible; is it possible that a running stitch or some other device has been used?

Fig. 3. Watermark and countermark.

I have not found references to paper that matches the above description. From 1674 until 1774 Van der Ley was a famous papermaker in the Zaanstreek in the west of the Netherlands. The firm had its hey-day in the first half of the eighteenth century. After 1774 it continued in another form until 1835 (Voorn [1960]:322-331, 403-404). The Liberty watermark described here first appeared in 1710; the royal ciphers are at least as early as that.

The preparations made for the writing down of the text were simple. The sheet of paper was folded in such a way that the left half, with the countermark in it, became fol. 2. The text was inscribed on fol. 1r; it consists of 11 lines. Prickings were made at the beginning of line 1 to line 10. The holes leave a margin of 5.1 cm to the left edge of fol. 1r and a margin of 5.6 cm to the upper edge; the interval between them is 1.15 cm at the average. Line 11 is not marked by a pricking; it begins exactly 17 cm from the upper edge of the paper or 1.2 cm under the pricking of the previous line. A second row of prickings runs parallel to the first row, 10.15 cm to the right. Their respec-
Line 1 shows clear traces of blind ruling: a horizontal guide-line at 5.6 cm from the upper edge, and a second one 0.15 cm under the first one. The Javanese aksaras fit exactly between them. In the other lines I could find no traces of this kind of double ruling, but there are single guide-lines here and there, drawn between the left and right prickings, notably in lines 2 and 9. If there were others, some must have coincided with folds in the sheet while others may have worn away. See Fig. 4 (the position of the text on the page is shown in Fig. 8).

**Fig. 4. Ruling and prickings in folio 1 recto.**

4. **The writing**


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7 Two other palaeographic studies are Holle (1882) and Damais (1955). Holle gives a list of characters in facsimile, without commentary, from dated inscriptions; Damais compares various Southeast Asian scripts on the basis of five characters.
from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries, thus including the period from which Natakusuma’s letter stems. He gives no palaeographic analysis – that is not the aim of his book – but every entry identifies the alphabet used, so his catalogue nevertheless contains a wealth of palaeographic information. This attention to the palaeographic aspect of manuscripts is also characteristic of Pigeaud’s later catalogues. De Casparis on the other hand does not discuss the period of Natakusuma’s letter – his survey does not go beyond 1500 – but he explicitly discusses the traits of the Javanese script in the various periods of its history; by doing so, he gives clues for palaeographic research of Modern Javanese script.

Pigeaud describes every manuscript, giving a short indication of the script in which it is written. After having identified the main type of script, Javanese, Arabic, Latin, etc., he usually gives more details according to category, origin, form, measures, etc. Curiously enough, he gives this specification in the case of Javanese script only. Pigeaud distinguishes three different categories of Javanese script: *buda*, *kraton*, and – presumably – the rest. The origin is sometimes indicated rather vaguely: Central Java, Pasirir, etc., at other times more precisely: Solo, Yogya, Cirebon, etc. As to form, a cursive and an upright type can be distinguished, while there are also a quadratic and a perpendicular type. The measures are expressed in terms of ‘large’ and ‘small’.

Next to the manuscripts accorded one of these labels, there are also manuscripts which go by several tokens at the same time. Manuscript LOr 8941 is written in quadratic script, LOr 1789 in quadratic script of a kraton, LOr 1869 in quadratic script of the kraton of Solo, NBG 14 in bold quadratic script of the kraton of Solo, etc. With the help of such combinations Pigeaud distinguishes more than a hundred different varieties. To these he sometimes adds some rather impressionistic qualifications, such as ‘clear’, ‘rustic’, ‘old fashioned’. Wherever it occurs, the year in which the manuscript was written is mentioned.

An important addition is formed by the facsimiles of writing in volume III of the catalogue. There are twenty-one, three of which are Arabic; so the facsimiles show but a very small portion of the possible variations.

The value of Pigeaud’s classification appears on second thought to be quite limited. Nowhere does he explain his criteria or the characteristics of the varieties distinguished. It is not difficult of course to see the difference between cursive and upright script, but how do I know whether it is the cursive script of Solo or of the northeast coast? Only if I happen to find among the facsimiles a picture exactly matched by the script of Natakusuma’s letter – *quod non* – can I apply Pigeaud’s classification, be it without a scholarly justification of what I see. Before we can use it, Pigeaud’s

nomenclature of one-hundred-odd items has to be provided with the necessary clues.

Leaving aside Pigeaud’s catalogue ‘full of learned discussions on Javanese, Balinese and Arabic script’ (De Casparis 1975:11) in anticipation of the required supplementary details, I turn to De Casparis for a scholarly analysis. His book on Indonesian palaeography is the only attempt so far to write a coherent history of, among others, Javanese script. It is regrettable that it has met with so little serious response.

De Casparis follows the development of Javanese script over more than one thousand years, from the beginning of the fifth century until the end of the fifteenth century (my term ‘Javanese’ is an anachronism for the first centuries). He divides this period into a number of sub-periods of two to three-and-a-half centuries, more or less corresponding to certain periods in political history. In his introduction De Casparis warns the reader, however, that although the historian may make such cuts, in reality there is a continuous development (1975:11). Only twice can one say that there is a distinct cleavage: between the so-called Early and Later Pallava script, and between the Javanese scripts from the middle of the fifteenth century and the Javanese script in its modern form. But even these discontinuities do not seem to form a rupture in history; they seem rather to arise from a lack of material, concealing evolutionary change over certain stretches of time.

De Casparis describes the various phases as follows. Firstly, he indicates his general impression of the script of a certain period, and what it is that brings this impression about. Secondly, he discusses individual characters in terms of their morphological difference from the preceding period. Finally, he considers the historico-cultural background of the script concerned.

An example is the ‘normal script’ from the Kadiri period (c. 1100-1220, to be distinguished from the ‘Kadiri Quadrata Script’, an ornamental script from the same period). After having remarked that the inscriptions from this period (our only source of information) clearly show a continuation of the preceding period, an impression brought about especially by its analogous type of ‘pointed serifs’, De Casparis mentions a second trait which also characterizes the script as a whole but, conversely, distinguishes the Kadiri period from the preceding one: the vertical elongation of the characters. During the preceding period the height and width of the characters were more or less the same; now, the characters are higher in relation to their width, just a little bit but quite consistently:

The actual difference, if expressed in measurements, is slight, approximately 5:4 or even a slightly lesser ratio, but it is consistent and therefore unmistakable. It entails a clear predominance of the vertical over the horizontal lines. (De Casparis 1975:41)

9 The emendation ‘pointed serifs’ instead of ‘painted serifs’ (De Casparis 1975:41) was suggested to me by Dr Noorduyn.
Among the individual signs there are four which show a striking development: the *paten*, the *aksara na*, the *sandhangan i* and the *pasangan wa*. De Casparis demonstrates this in a meticulous description of the way in which these signs are written. Take the *paten* for example:

In all the earlier inscriptions in Kawi script, including those of Airlangga [i.e. the immediately preceding period], the *patèn* starts on top of, or well above, the *aksara* and runs subsequently in a wide curve round its right-hand side. In the Kadiri inscriptions, on the other hand, the *patèn* starts precisely at the top level of the *aksara* but then runs below the base line in an elegant curve to the left. The complete height of the *patèn* becomes precisely twice that of the normal letters. This innovation proved successful; at least for the next few centuries the *patèn* retained this basic shape. (De Casparis 1975:41)

Finally, De Casparis gives the script under discussion its place in the framework of cultural history. The Kadiri period is known in history as a period of a highly developed, very refined court culture with a flourishing literature, and the script seems to reflect this in its balance between functional clarity and aesthetic elegance, thanks to an almost perfect regularity and refined, but nowhere dominating, stylistic embellishment (1975:41-42).

Although De Casparis focuses on one particular period, it is evident that a number of principles he observes might also be applied successfully to the description of the writing of other periods. One of the most important principles is the idea of writing as a system of symbols with communication as its chief function, in which the constituent elements influence each other, and which is subject to change as a whole. Among other things, this means that all the signs used should be unequivocally differentiated; therefore, signs which are too similar tend to develop new distinctive features (an important drive for modification, next to changes in technique and taste, and the human tendency towards simplification). Another implication is that one should not look at the development of individual letters in isolation but of letters as part of the whole system (De Casparis 1975:7-9). The consistent elongation of the Kadiri *aksaras* referred to above, for example, is not directly compared with the shape of the corresponding *aksaras* in the preceding period, but as the quotient of height and width: absolute values might say something about the proportions of a given specimen of script, but relative values inform us in general about the script of a given period.

In one regard, however, I disagree with De Casparis. For a correct analysis of individual letters and their relation to other elements, it is necessary not only to describe that visible shape which is the product of a writing hand in motion, but also to understand how that shape came into being: in other words, to describe the construction of a letter, or its literal structure. The successive strokes which build a letter are part of that structure, but no less important are the order in which they are drawn and the movements of
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the pen through the air, when it is lifted from the paper in order to make a connection at some other point. These can help us to see how a given shape could generate a new one: what at first sight looks totally different (for example the presence of a new stroke) might in reality be the result of the same movement but now with the pen touching the paper. De Casparis does not pay attention to this aspect, and therefore he is sometimes not able to give a satisfying description or to explain a certain development. An example is his ‘static’ analysis of the inscription of Ngadoman in Central Java (De Casparis 1975:65-66), whereas a ‘dynamic’ analysis would lead to completely different results. As I have previously dealt with this elsewhere, I shall not repeat the argument but refer the reader to Van der Molen (1983: 96-97).

Although De Casparis himself explicitly expresses his debt to Dani 1963 (De Casparis 1975:4), it is clear that Indonesian palaeography has also profited from Ullman, whose Ancient writing of 1932 cannot but have inspired it: the list of factors which modify a script, the various aspects of writing discussed, and the order in which they are discussed – overall impression, individual signs, historico-cultural context – all stem from Ullman. Now Ullman’s work is not the latest development in western palaeography. My disagreement is inspired by a method which was developed as early as 1952 by Mallon as an alternative to the pre-war approach. The analysis of a script according to this method involves several aspects. One of the most important aspects is the structure (or ‘ductus’ as Mallon calls it) of a letter, defined by Mallon as the number of strokes, and the order and direction in which they are drawn. Later scholars have criticized Mallon for laying too much stress on the aspect of ductus; they have tried to redress the balance by working out other aspects and adding new ones (see Gilissen 1973, among others). However, these elaborations do not seem to have invalidated Mallon’s method but rather to have supplemented it.

It is out of the question to give a full analysis here of the script of Natakusuma’s letter in the sense of De Casparis’s and Mallon’s work, but I outline a few characteristic traits on the basis of the principles laid down by them.

If script is defined as a system in which all the signs should be unequivocally differentiated, it seems odd that there would be different signs with the same meaning and different meanings expressed by one sign. Nevertheless, this seems to be the case in the script of Natakusuma’s letter. The ha pasangan has two forms: similar to the corresponding aksara, but with initial reduction if it follows behind the preceding aksara (anl), with changed final part if it is placed under the preceding aksara (anl). In the text examples can be found of the post-written pasangan in line 8, of the sub-written pasangan in lines 3 (uncertain), 4 and 6.

It looks as if the sign \(^{\prime}\) has been assigned two meanings: as a punctuation mark and as an \(h\) in final position. Examples are in lines 1 (in the
second kaṭah of hakaṭah kaṭah and 2 (after sumnap.). Note that there is another sign for the final h, as illustrated in the first kaṭah of hakaṭah kaṭah.

The shape of the ta and ba in the script of Natakusuma’s letter are very similar. Both are written with the same ductus, in two movements. They cannot be distinguished from each other except by the little stroke with which the second component begins: in the ta it is straight, in the ba it is wavy. See Fig. 5 (the figures and arrows clarify the ductus, the dotted lines indicate the intersection where the pen has been lifted from the paper).

Fig. 5. Structure of the ta and ba.

This is presumably an example of those situations described by De Casparis where tension within the system, caused by the great similarity of two signs, could lead to a change in the shape of one or both of the signs, which in its turn would mark the end of the period to which the script of Natakusuma’s letter belongs. This is indeed what happens in a later variety of Javanese script. In the case of the ta and the ba, it is the ta which will undergo a change. The movement of the pen, which invisibly bridges the two components in the time of Natakusuma, becomes manifest in a later period and/or another area in the shape of a line which connects the two components. This change implies a difference of structure: the ta in its new appearance is written in one movement. See Fig. 6.

Fig. 6. Development of the ta and ba.

The aksara sa (ṣa) has no such near counterpart as far as I can see. It has a peculiar shape if we take into account another of the changing forces behind the system: the writing hand has to make a detour to arrive at a point where it could arrive with less effort. This will happen in fact at a later stage, when a simple loop replaces the more demanding earlier movement.

The relevant part of its structure could be described as follows. It is written in one uninterrupted movement of the pen. The initial rising and descending line turns to the left halfway in its descent and, making a circular movement which touches the initial ascender, continues at the base level in a horizontal direction to the right, but with a distinct, upward indent exactly below the descender. It is this circular movement with upward indent which later on will be replaced by one loop, producing the same appearance with less effort but, at the same time, giving up another characteristic trait of the script used in the letter of Natakusuma. See Fig. 7.
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Fig. 7. Natakusuma’s and the Modern Javanese sa.

5. The text

The text block occupies part of the upper half of fol. 1r; exact measurements are given in Fig. 8. Note that there is no right margin; the text has been written up to the very edge of the paper. The text is graphically divided into three sections. The first section, which contains the names of the sender and addressee and the greetings, begins with a sort of pada madya or pada andhap, the punctuation mark for opening a letter addressed to one’s equal or one’s inferior. Whether such a distinction is intended here is not clear to me, due to lack of comparative material. The second section, separated from the first by a blank space, contains the message proper, introduced by the expression ‘sasampuni kadya sapunika, wiyosipun...’ (‘After having said this, first of all...’). This section in its turn is separated by a blank space from the final section, which starts on a new line and contains the date of the letter.

The scribe of the letter – whether this is Natakusuma himself or a clerk is not important for the present analysis – makes several mistakes. In line 1 a superfluous ra is crossed out in the Javanese way, that is, made illegible by adding two vowels. Line 5 after ‘ing’ contains the remains of a character which was begun but not continued. In ‘gagsal’ (line 8) the pen slipped while writing the la. These mistakes do not spoil the impression of the letter as a neat document. The adding of the omitted ri in line 2, however, is awkward.

Of the other irregularities I only mention that the sign for the ē in line 3 has landed on the second syllable of ‘sadaya’, resulting in sadēya instead of sēdaya. The name of Natakusuma’s residential town is spelled in two different ways: once as ‘Sumnap’ and once as ‘Sumnēp’ (lines 2 and 10). A peculiar feature, foreshadowed by the irregularly distributed prickings (see p. 99), is the outright neglect of the ruling – to the advantage of the letter.

There are some aksara murda in the letter: na, īa, ša, pa, and ga. The low frequency with which they occur does not allow us to decide whether they already have the honorific function of later years.

The scribe has taken the trouble to render some foreign sounds properly with the help of the diacritical signs available to him in this script, in the words ‘fan’, ‘doğah’, and ‘rabihulaker’ (see lines 2, 7 and 10).
In the left margin of fol. 1r is a circular, red wax seal with the name of the sender, in Latin characters. The impress has not come through completely; it reads:

1. Pange<ran> l
2. <Na>ta l
3. Cass..mo l
4. t Sumap ll

The missing syllables filled in by me in lines 1 and 2 do not raise any problem; of the r as well as of the N a trace is still visible; in any event, not much else could have been written there. The spelling ‘Cass..mo’ with an a is strange; it is perhaps a hypercorrect rendering of the pronunciation kesuma. Whether we should read oe or u in the missing part, I do not know; compare the fourth line where a u is spelled, a representation of the [u]-sound in Latin characters which I would not expect at this date. It seems as if the designer of the seal had to solve a problem of space. I cannot other-

Fig. 8. Position of the seal (*) and the text on folio 1 recto.

wise explain the concise spelling of the last line. The ‘t’ must be the Dutch preposition te (‘at’); ‘Sumap’ is the efficient rendering of Sumnap, realized by using the ascending line of the u also as the first descending line of the m, and the last descending line of the m at the same time as the first descending line of the n.
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The seal is placed in the 5.1 cm wide margin to the left of the text, at 4.8 cm from the upper edge, 1 cm from the left edge, 1.5 cm from the text. See Fig. 8.

After the letter was completed, it was folded to a smaller size, as illustrated in Fig. 9. It was folded first along line I, bringing lines II and III together. Then it was folded along lines II/III, as a result making IV and V, and VI and VII all coincide with each other. Along these it was folded for the third time. Finally, it was folded vertically along lines IX and X. One can suppose that the sender, not yet satisfied, gave a final touch by folding along lines XI and XII, but the fold through the seal is quite impossible. As there is no address, I suppose that an envelope was used.

Fig. 9. Original folding lines.

The above is my interpretation of the numerous folds which run across the sheet. I have no proof that there have ever been such things as ‘original’ or ‘archival’ folds. The order in which the folds have been made can of course not be seen; I base my guess on the distances between the lines.

While some of the folds are very distinct because of the damage they have caused to the paper, other folds can hardly be seen. To safeguard the present owner’s peace of mind, I have refrained from experiments.
7. Conclusion

A few conclusions can be drawn from the above. The identification of ‘budho fan Setah’ as the bailiff Hendrik van Setten has revealed an unexpected relationship between an upper-class Madurese and a lower-class Dutchman in late eighteenth-century East Indies society. My description of the filigrane pattern, despite its great detail, does not say more at this moment than that paper, produced by the Van der Ley company in the west of the Netherlands, found its way at some point in the eighteenth century to far-away Madura. De Casparis’s palaeographic method, if supplemented with more modern findings, seems a promising one for defining the various types of Modern Javanese script. The finished letter evokes the image of a man who did not care too much about outward appearances.

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Negende deel, uitgegeven en bewerkt door M.L. van Deventer.


Tiende en laatste deel, uitgegeven en bewerkt door M.L. van Deventer.


Naamboek, [s.a.], Naamboek van de wel-edele heeren der hoge Indiasche regeering, zoo tot, als buiten, Batavia; mitsgaders van de politie bedienden, die van de justitie, de kerk, burgery, zeevaart, militie, artillerie, chirurgie, &c., zoo als dezelve onder ultimo december 1773 alhier in wezen zyn bevonden: item de gouverneurs, directeurs, en commandeurs, mitsgaders verdere opperhoofden en mindere bedienden, op de respective comptoiren van Indië. Nevens een lyst van de persoonen, die gerepatrieerd, en een van die naar de buiten-comptoiren veriooken zyn; item een van de overledenen. Batavia: Egbert Heemen.

– [s.a.], Naamboek van de wel-edele heeren der hoge Indiasche regeering, zoo tot, als buiten, Batavia; mitsgaders van de politie bedienden, die van de justitie, de kerk, burgery, zeevaart, militie, artillerie, chirurgie, &c., zoo als dezelve onder ultimo december 1775 alhier in wezen zyn bevonden: item de gouverneurs, directeurs, en commandeurs, mitsgaders verdere opperhoofden en mindere bedienden, op de respective comptoiren van Indië. Nevens een lyst van de persoonen, die gerepatrieerd, en een van die naar de buiten-comptoiren vertokken zyn; item een van de overledenen. Batavia: Egbert Heemen.

– [s.a.], Naamboek van de wel-edele heeren der hoge Indiasche regeering, zoo tot, als buiten, Batavia; mitsgaders van de politie bedienden, die van de justitie, de kerk, burgery, zeevaart, militie, artillerie, chirurgie, &c., zoo als dezelve onder ultimo december 1778 alhier in wezen zyn bevonden: item de gouverneurs, directeurs, en commandeurs, mitsgaders verdere opperhoofden en mindere bedienden, op de respective comptoiren van Indië. Nevens een lyst van de persoonen, die gerepatrieerd, en een van die naar de buiten-comptoiren veriooken zyn; item een van de overledenen. Batavia: Egbert Heemen.


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APPENDIX

Text of Natakusuma’s letter
Fig. 10. Reproduction of folio 1 recto of Natakusuma’s letter.
Diplomatic transliteration

1 punikaḥ šērat šaha tabe kahula hiṅkaḥ hakaṭaḥ kaṭaḥ sakiṅ sahudara
hijēṇandikaḥ kaṅjēn paṇera[r]ṇa naṭakusuma l
2 ḥhiṅkaḥ hapaḷṅgaḥ hiṅ paṇaḡa<k> kumpni hiṅ sumnap.ḥ ḍumatēṇaḥ
hiṅkaḥ sahudaraḥ tuwan buḍo faṅ setaḥ hiṅ ṇaḡari batawi l
3 yaḥ kalayan tabeḥ kula ḍatēṇaḥ rayi hijēṇandikaḥ ḥ šarṭa tabeni hanak
kanak kahula sadēyaḥ ḍatēṇa hijēṇandi..\[10\] l
4 ḥ miwah ḍatēṇaḥ rayi hijēṇandikaḥ kalayan kan mugi suḍara sinuṇēṇa
yuṣya kaṅ apaṅjaṅ, šalamēttīn\[11\] salami-lamine, l
5 hiṅ [...] dalm. dunya puniki;
; saśampuni kadya sapunika, hawiyos kahula hasuka huniṇa l
6 ḍatēṇ hijēṇandika, yen in maṅke sakitipun hanak kahula sampun ūmi
saras kalihipun. pikantuḥ l
7 duʿaḥ hijēṇandika, kalayan punika, kahula haṅaturi pikintun. ḍatēṇ
kaṛṣa hijēṇandika, hawar l
8 ŋni liša gaṅṣal. taṅ; kalayan maliḥ kawula hanitipakēn hiṅ hutsuṣan
kahula, manawi wontē l
9 n kasusahanipun., batēn laṅkuṅ pituluṅ ijēṇandika; l
10 ; kaṣērat hiṅ panagari sumnēp., taṅgal., 18, saśi rabihulakeṛ tahun
dal., haṅka ni waṛṣa; l
11 ; 1703 ; l

\[10\] Text lost due to damage of the paper.
\[11\] An awkward form of the pasangan ta or a subscript pasangan ha?
Critical transliteration

1 Punika serat saha tabe kawula ingkang akathah-kathah saking saudara ijengandika kangjeng pangeran Natakusuma 1
2 ingkang apalenggah ing panagari Kumpeni ing Sumenap dhumatenga ingkang saudara tuwan budho fan Setah ing nagari Batawi- 1
3 yah kalayan tabe kula dhatenga rayi ijengandika sarta tabeni anak-anak kawula sadaya dhatenga ijengandika 1
4 miwah dhatenga rayi ijengandika kalayan kang mugi sudhara sinungena yuswa kang apanjang, salamet ing salami-lamine 1
5 ing dalem dunya puniki. Sasampuni kadya sapunika, awiyos kawula asuka uninga 1
6 dhateng ijengandika yen ing mangke sakitipun anak kawula sampun sami saras kalihipun, pikantuk 1
7 dunga ijengandika. Kalayan punika kawula angaturi pikintun dhateng karsa ijengandika, awar- 1
8 ni lisa gangsal tang. Kalayan malih kawula anitipaken ing utusan kawula. Manawi won te 1
9 n kasusahanipun, haten langkung pitulung ijengandika. 1
10 Kaserat ing panagari Sumenep, tanggal 18 sasi Rabiulakhir taun Dal, angkani warsa 1
11 1703. 11

Translation

1 Letter and many greetings from kangjeng pangeran Natakusuma 1
2 in Sumenep to Mr bode Van Setten in Batavia 1
3 and wife and greetings from all my children to you 1
4 and your wife. May yours be a long life and well being for always 1
5 in this world. After having said this, first of all I would like 1
6 to let you know that both my children have recovered, thanks to 1
7 your prayer. Further, I have the honour to offer you 1
8 five kegs of oil, which I send with my messenger. If 1
9 difficulties arise, I count on nothing but your help. 1
10 Written at Sumenep, 18 Rabiulakhir Dal 1
11 1703. 1