

## Strengthening Harmonious Islam Through a Philological Approach

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Info Article	Abstract
<p><b>Article History</b>            Received: 2025-09-05            Revised: 2025-09-15            Published: 2025-09-30</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b>  <i>Harmony, Philology,            Harmony, Nusantara            Islam, Ancient            Manuscripts</i></p>	<p>Indonesia possesses an extensive cultural heritage, one of the most valuable forms of which is its collection of ancient manuscripts. These manuscripts preserve historical, religious, legal, literary, and cultural knowledge that reflects the intellectual development of the Indonesian archipelago, particularly the spread and evolution of Islam Nusantara. However, many of these manuscripts are currently threatened by physical deterioration, inadequate preservation, and limited scholarly attention. This study aims to examine the scope of Nusantara manuscripts, explain the concept and significance of the philological approach, and describe the procedures of philological research in preserving and interpreting ancient texts. This research employs a qualitative method through observation, interviews, and literature review to analyze manuscript preservation practices and relevant archival regulations. The findings reveal that Nusantara manuscripts, written in various local languages and scripts such as Malay, Javanese, Pegon, and Arabic, constitute an invaluable source of knowledge covering religion, history, law, politics, medicine, customs, and other disciplines. Philology plays a crucial role in restoring, transliterating, authenticating, and interpreting these manuscripts to ensure their textual accuracy and historical reliability. Furthermore, philological studies contribute significantly to safeguarding Indonesia's cultural heritage, strengthening the identity of Islam Nusantara, and providing reliable primary sources for interdisciplinary research in history, law, sociology, anthropology, and religious studies. Therefore, the philological approach is indispensable not only for manuscript preservation but also for promoting a deeper understanding of Indonesia's rich intellectual and cultural traditions.</p>

### I. INTRODUCTION

It is no longer a secret that Indonesia is a country that has an abundance of various arts and cultures in various forms. One of the cultural products that is a cultural heritage is ancient manuscripts. The cultural treasures of the archipelago that contain the values of harmonious Islamic teachings have made a number of foreign researchers carry them to various countries and continents. In various institutions in England, for example, there are around 300 ancient texts that have historical value in the Republic of Indonesia.

Meanwhile, in the Netherlands, there are tens of thousands of Nusantara manuscripts stored in various libraries there. Recently, the DIY Regional Library and Archives Agency (BPAD) hunted for books and manuscripts related to DIY from the Tropen Museum in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Because not long ago, the Tropen Museum had given as many as 13,000 historical documents

including ancient manuscripts to the Ministry of Education and Culture which were then given to the National Library. 6,000 of these documents were given to the Sebelas Maret National University (UNS) Surakarta at the request of the rector which was approved by the Minister of Education and Culture. Therefore, there are still 7000 documents in the National Library. (Indonesia.", 2016)

When lately there is a surge in the study of Islam Nusantara, then it is very naive if it is not accompanied by enrichment and mastery of the philological approach in Islamic studies in Nusantara. In this philological study, the manuscripts of Islam Nusantara are used as the material objects of their study.

There are several strategic advantages at once in studying the manuscripts of Nusantara Islam, including: First, it can explore the uniqueness and dynamics of Islam and local Muslim communities, because the manuscripts of Nusantara Islam, in

addition to using Arabic, are also written in various local languages such as Acehese, Balinese, Batak, Dutch, Bugis-Makassar-Mandar, Javanese & Old Javanese, Madurese, Malay, Minangkabau, Sanskrit, Sasak, Sundanese and Old Sundanese, Ternate, East Indonesian languages, Kalimantan languages, and South Sumatran languages, so studying them means that it will be a kind of 'shortcut' to find out the patterns of interaction and encounters between Islam and local cultures in the Nusantara, which of course becomes its own intellectual wealth. Second, the study of Nusantara Islamic manuscripts will automatically become part of the effort to preserve Indonesian cultural heritage objects in order to maintain the identity of diversity, nationality, and ensure the continuity of the transmission of knowledge that has been inherited for hundreds of years. Third, the success of mapping the glory of the intellectual tradition of Nusantara Islam can in turn show the international world that Nusantara is not a peripheral part, but an inseparable part (integral part), of the Islamic world as a whole. Thus, it is a necessity for a Muslim scientist to understand and practice the philological approach in the study of Nusantara Islam. (Fathurrahman, 1999.) So in this short paper the author will discuss three things:

- (1) The scope of manuscripts in Nusantara;
- (2) The meaning and understanding of the philological approach;
- (3) Philological research procedures;
- (4) Conclusions.

## II. RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses qualitative methods by collecting data through observation, interviews and literature reviews related to archival regulations. Firstly, this research carried out direct observations of how the records management system, including the process of recording, storing and deleting records. Furthermore, this research also conducted interviews with relevant staff to gain a deeper understanding of the procedures used and how the list of records proposed for destruction was created. Finally, this research conducted a literature study on the Law and Perka as a reference for depreciation and destruction. This field observation method provides direct insight

and accurate data which is the main basis for analyzing the extent of the efficiency and effectiveness of records management using the list of records subject to destruction.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this very limited space, the author will examine the four focus issues above with the hope of making the esteemed readers aware of how rich the cultural treasures of the Indonesian archipelago are as an identity and at the same time the cultural character of the nation.

### The Scope Of Manuscripts In The Archipelago

what is meant by a manuscript is all records of information written by hand by someone three to four hundred years ago. The definition of 'manuscript' in this context is the opposite of a document produced by a printing press or similar tool. Meanwhile, if referring to the Cultural Heritage Law No. 11 of 2010, a handwritten manuscript can be categorized as a cultural heritage object if it is at least 50 (fifty) years old, and has special meaning for history, science, education, religion, and/or culture. (Fathurrahman, 1999.)

According to initial research on a number of collections, Nusantara Islamic manuscripts are indeed found in large numbers, and are written in various local languages such as Malay, Javanese, Sundanese, and others, in addition to Arabic manuscripts. In general, physically, these manuscripts are now in a worrying condition and are very vulnerable to destruction, either due to natural factors or due to human carelessness. (Fathurrahman, 1999.)

The history of Indonesian culture for centuries has inherited a written treasure in the form of Nusantara manuscripts, the number of which is very abundant. The content of the Nusantara manuscript itself is very broad and is not limited to literature alone, but covers various other fields such as religion, history, law, sultanate politics, conflict resolution, customs, medicine, engineering, etc., so it will be very relevant as general knowledge material in the world of education in Indonesia.

For example, in Aceh, in the 16th–17th centuries there were quite a lot of manuscript

writers. For example, Hamzah Fansuri, who was known as a famous Sufi figure in his time. Then there is Sheikh Nuruddin ar-Raniri alias Sheikh Nuruddin Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn Hasanji ibn Muhammad Hamid ar-Raniri al-Quraisyi. He is known as a scholar who also served as Qadhi al-Malik al-Adil and Mufti Muaddam in the Sultanate of Aceh under the leadership of Sultan Iskandar Tsani in the 16th century. One of his famous works is entitled "Bustanul Salatin." Sheikh Abdul Rauf al-Singkili, who was also appointed as Mufti and Qadhi Malik al-Adil in the Aceh Sultanate during the period of four queens, also wrote many Islamic manuscripts.

Their works not only developed in Aceh, but also developed throughout Sumatra, the Malacca Peninsula to Southern Thailand. Their works also influenced the thinking and early Islamic civilization in Java, Sulawesi, Kalimantan, Nusa Tenggara, the Maluku Islands, Buton to Papua. So that in that area there are also relics of the works of this Acehnese scholar.

Further developments, gave rise to Islamic works in other areas such as the Book of Sabilal Muhtadin by Sheikh al Banjari in Banjarmasin. In Palembang there is also. In Banten there was Sheikh al Bantani who also wrote many manuscripts. All of these manuscripts became references for the people and rulers at that time. Meanwhile in Central Java there was Kyai Sholeh Darat who produced many works of interpretation and a number of books in Javanese with the Pegon script. Even in Central Java there is a community group of Kyai Sholeh Darat lovers known as KOPI SODA (Kyai Sholeh Darat Lovers Group). Routine monthly studies are also conducted which are continued with discussions via wa group which enlighten each other among them.

The oldest Islamic manuscript in the Indonesian archipelago was found in Terengganu, Malaysia. This manuscript is called Batu Bersurat which was made in 1303 (14th century). This article explains the spread and followers of Islam at that time. This manuscript has been researched by experts in Islamic history and archaeology in Malaysia such as Prof. Naquib Alatas and others, all of whom concluded this manuscript is the oldest in Southeast Asia. Secondly, still in the 14th

century, in 1310, poetry about Islam was found written in Malay with Jawi letters in Minya' Tujoh, Aceh. Therefore, experts agree that the development of scholarly works written in Jawi letters had developed in the 14th century during the Samudra Pasai caliphate and other Islamic caliphates on the Malacca Peninsula. In the younger period of the 16th–17th century, manuscripts were also found in other areas such as the Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai, Hikayat Melayu, Hikayat Aceh, Hikayat Hasanuddin, Babat Tana Jawi, Babad Cirebon, Babat Banten, Carita Purwaka Caruban Nagari. In Nusa Tenggara, the poetry of the Bima Kingdom was found, Bo'Sangaji Kai, Notes of the Bima Kingdom. From Maluku there is the Hikayat Hitu. In Sulawesi there are the Hikayat Goa, Hikayat Wajo and others.

Meanwhile, manuscripts in Javanese with Pegon script are often found in Central Java, East Java and Tatar Pasundan. For example, the oldest work with Pegon letters is the work of Sunan Bonang or Sheikh al-Barri entitled Wukuf Sunan Bonang. This work, written in the 16th century, uses Middle Javanese mixed with Arabic. This manuscript is a translation and interpretation of the Book of Ihya Ulumuddin by Imam al-Ghazzali. This manuscript was found in Tuban, East Java. In his work, Sunan Bonang as quoted by Tjandrasasmita (2009) wrote, "this manuscript was used by the Waliallah and the scholars, then I translated it and for the partners (comrades) who were struggling in spreading Islam in Java." This work is an example that in the 16th century, as a period of growth of the Islamic kingdom in the archipelago, at the same time the works of scholars who played a major role in the spread of Islam in the archipelago also developed.

According to Uka Tjandrasasmita's tracking, various types of Nusantara manuscripts are partly big in the Netherlands, precisely at Leiden University. During the VOC and Dutch colonial era, they collected, then stole and looted classical Islamic manuscripts for their own interests. Among other things, to perpetuate colonialism and eliminate traces of Islamic civilization from its original source in the Middle East. With the confiscation of the works of the scholars, Muslims in the archipelago lost the authentic source of Islamic development. This is what caused the colonization to last for hundreds of years.

Meanwhile, according to Tjandrasasmita (2009), there are only around 20 manuscripts in Jawi script and Malay in the Jakarta National Library.

### Understanding Philology And Manuscript

Philology is a science whose object of research is old manuscripts (Djamaris, 2002, p. 1). The word "philology" comes from Latin which consists of two words *philos* and *logos*. *Philos* means love and *logos* means word (*logos* also means science). So philology literally means love of words. That is why philology is always busy with words. Words are considered, corrected, compared, their origins explained and so on, so that their form and meaning are clear.

This understanding of philology then developed, from the understanding of love for words to love for science. Philology is not only busy with text criticism, and explanatory comments, but also a science that investigates the culture of a nation based on manuscripts. The object remains the same, namely manuscripts. From philological research, we can find out the cultural background that produces literary works, such as beliefs, customs and views on life of a nation.

Indeed, the main work in philological research, as stated by Dr. Haryati Soebadio as quoted is to recover a manuscript that is free from errors, which means providing the best possible understanding and which can be accounted for, so that we can find out the manuscript that is closest to the original, because the manuscript was previously copied for the umpteenth time; and also fits with the culture that gave birth to it, so it needs to be cleaned from additions that were printed in a later era that was done when it was copied. This is important, so that the contents of the manuscript are not interpreted incorrectly. (Djamaris, 2002)

Clearly, a manuscript must first be carefully examined, compared, after which it can be used for other research, such as history, law, religion and sociology. This needs to be done to find out whether the contents of the manuscript are not wrong or adapted by others; whether the contents are not different between one manuscript and another. If there are differences, are they caused by typos, misreadings, forgetfulness, overwriting,

so that it will cause misinterpretation. The contents of a new manuscript may be discussed if the manuscript in question has been studied as deeply as possible philologically, as mentioned above. Before a philological study is conducted, the results cannot be ascertained. It can be said that the results are only temporary, because it is possible that the text used was misinterpreted by historians, sociologists, legal experts, and so on. A story is written in one or more manuscripts and generally more than one manuscript; there are more than 40 manuscripts such as Tambo Minangkabau. A manuscript is reproduced by copying which can be done by anyone, because the story is considered to be shared property. But it must also be remembered that people who were good at writing at that time were also very few, so it is not surprising that people who had the manuscript felt very proud and considered it a sacred object. If someone wanted to read the contents of the manuscript, they were also required to hold a certain ceremony.

The more manuscripts for a story, the better, so that we get a clear picture of the story; however, the research is more complicated, because it will take time and require thoroughness to read all the manuscripts and compare them.

Now the question arises, why was the manuscript copied. The answer is there are several possibilities. The manuscript was copied, because of the desire to have the story, or perhaps the original manuscript was damaged, so a new copy had to be made. Based on that, several similar manuscripts arose. It is also possible that an oral story that had spread among the community, then arose the desire to copy it. It is these types of manuscripts that we generally encounter many differences.

Based on observations of existing manuscripts, it can be estimated that the method of copying the manuscript is as follows. The copyist copies a manuscript automatically, carelessly and does not pay attention to the contents of the sentences in the manuscript he copied, so that there are often typos. There are also copyists who pay attention to the contents of the sentences, so that they deliberately change words, add or reduce words or sentence structures that are considered wrong,

so that there are several manuscripts with different language styles. Another possibility as mentioned above, the story was copied from an oral story. Of course, in writing there are parts that are forgotten or the structure of the story is different. (Baried, 1985)

These are the things that need to be explained by philologists. A careful philologist must be able to explain why the copyist of the manuscript wrote the wrong words or unclear or careless. Is it because the writer was not careful, or did not know the words he wrote, because of a lack of knowledge of the words and content of the story of the manuscript he copied, so that he did not understand the intention of the author of the manuscript whose manuscript was used as the source.

Meanwhile, what is meant by manuscript here is all the written remains of our ancestors on paper, palm leaves, bark and rattan. Handwriting on paper is usually used in Malay and Javanese manuscripts; Lontar is widely used in Javanese and Balinese manuscripts and bark and rattan are commonly used in Batak language manuscripts. In English these texts are called "manuscripts" and in Dutch they are called "handscripts". This needs to be explained to distinguish written relics on stones. Stones that have writing on them are usually called plaques, stones with letters, or inscriptions and knowledge in the field of stone writing is called epigraphy. (Djamaris, 2002)

Considering the material of the manuscript as mentioned above, it is clear that the manuscript cannot survive hundreds of years without careful maintenance and special care, as we can find abroad. Maintaining manuscripts so that they do not quickly become damaged includes, among other things, regulating the temperature of the air where the manuscript is stored, so that it does not rot quickly; coating the weathered papers with special paper, so that they are strong again; and spraying the manuscripts for a certain period of time with chemicals that can kill the powders that eat the paper. This is among other special care for the manuscripts, but the ink that breaks down and the paper that quickly turns yellow or in other words the poor quality of the ink and paper is difficult to overcome.

It can be imagined that if the manuscripts are not carefully cared for, they will quickly be destroyed and no longer have value as a cultural heritage of our ancestors. Manuscripts are not jewelry that can be proud of just show it. The manuscript is only valuable if it can still be read and understood. This is where the importance of the philological approach is carried out

#### IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

##### A. Conclusion

From the description above, it can be concluded that in the archipelago which is full of harmonious and friendly cultural values as the background of Indonesian culture, there are various manuscripts or ancient manuscripts scattered in various cities. In various cities in Java, many Javanese literature and Islamic boarding school manuscripts have been found. In several cities in Sumatra, many Malay manuscripts have been found, from Sufism to Malay literature, and several other areas reflect the network of knowledge and scholars of the archipelago. So all handwritings, whether written on paper, wood, leather, leaves or bamboo slabs and are more than 50 years old, can be categorized as ancient manuscript heritage which is worthy of being preserved and developed in strengthening the identity of Islam Nusantara through a philological approach.

One of the tasks of philologists in their main role is to transliterate (translate), so that ancient manuscripts can be read more widely. From this transliteration of the manuscript, further research can be carried out in the form of analysis of the contents of the manuscript. The analysis or discussion can be in the form of language analysis, story structure, story function, foreign influences, cultural background, and elements of belief that play a role in the story. The results of the transliteration or transcription can also be used as objects of research for other sciences, such as history, law, religion, sociology, and anthropology, according to the type of manuscript available.

##### B. Suggestion

From this perspective, it can be understood that the products of Islamic studies with a philological approach will be interrelated with

other disciplines. So the extent to which the products of philological research contribute to science depends on the intelligence and creativity of researchers in linking the scientific disciplines they are studying. Including in finding the identity of Nusantara Islam which is known to be friendly and harmonious in its relations with God, fellow human beings and the environment, it will certainly require sources from ancient manuscripts that are full of the dynamics of classical science that is still authentic. So it is time for one of the efforts to strengthen harmonious Islam in the archipelago by prioritizing a philological approach so that the identity of this nation is not eroded by modernity. With a philological approach, we convey friendly Islam ala Nusantara to the world.

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