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# ***Sujarah Banyumas: An Assessment Report on the Kepangeranan Banyumas Manuscripts Collection***

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## **Abstract**

*This paper concerns the current status of the Sujarah Banyumas manuscript in the Kepangeranan Banyumas manuscripts collection. The Kepangeranan Banyumas manuscript collection is from the extended family of Kanjeng Pangeran Adipati Arya Gandasubrata. These manuscripts were received by the Universitas Indonesia Library and need to be managed and preserved for future references. Previous studies have addressed the idea that special collections or manuscripts should be preserved to be as tangible cultural heritage and be important to society's development. The manuscript was visually examined to determine the physical condition of the manuscript sheets. A total of five pages were sampled to identify the condition of the manuscript. The assessment shows that the manuscript is still in readable condition, although deterioration was found in some parts. Digitisation of the manuscript is suggested to provide sustainable access to the textual content without risking further damage to the manuscript itself.*

**Keyword:** *Sujarah Banyumas, Kepangeranan Banyumas, manuscripts collection, manuscript assessment, digitisation*

## INTRODUCTION

The library plays an essential role in the collection and preservation of ancient manuscripts. According to Oinam and Thoidingjam (2019), libraries are the gathering sites for all types of knowledge, including intellectual and cultural heritage and academic libraries are particularly well-equipped to serve this function. Academic libraries preserve and manage ancient manuscripts to support the academic environment and serve the broader public, both for educational and research purposes. Preserving historical manuscripts ensures that the information contained within them remains available for continued use and study. Russo (2017) has pointed out that research on special collections preservation must be developed and nourished if it is to have more tangible and significant impacts on society.

Universitas Indonesia Library is an academic library housing rare books and manuscript collections. In 2018, the library received ancient Banyumas manuscripts from the extended family of Kanjeng Pangeran Adipati Arya Gandasubrata, also known as Kepangeranan Banyumas. The entire collection is comprised of 64 manuscripts, including manuscripts in the physical forms of *dluwang* and European paper. This paper aims to describe the physical condition of the *Sujarah Banyumas* manuscript in Gandasubrata's Banyumas manuscripts collection to evaluate the need for preservation priority. A summary of the manuscript's contents is provided, in addition to documentation of the manuscript's current physical condition. The manuscript identified in this research has never previously been studied; therefore, the goal of this paper is to provide a physical assessment in the hope that the manuscript and its content will be preserved for future researchers.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The term "manuscript" is derived from the Latin *manu scriptus*, meaning "written by hand", an etymology that is essential to understanding the manuscript's history and cultural relevance (Baquee and Raza, 2020). According to Singh (2011), manuscripts are invaluable resources in the quest to preserve cultural traditions and promote the civilisation of a nation. Manuscripts are a tangible element of cultural heritage that serve as a 'bridge' to convey ideas and wisdom from the past to the present society.

Several works focused on manuscript preservation by libraries and other cultural institutions approach the topic from different angles. Rahmawati (2019) outlined manuscript preservation activities at the Library and Archives Service (DISPERSIP) of South Kalimantan and Lambung Mangkurat Museum in South Kalimantan. Both institutions implemented digitisation to preserve the content of manuscripts and ensure continued information access. By addressing challenges in the special collection management of Timbuktu manuscript collections, Russo (2017) underlined the need for cultural institutions to raise youth awareness of cultural heritage.

Other studies sought to identify the current condition of special and rare collections. In 2005, Starmer, McGough, Leverette (2005) performed a rare book collection condition survey at the University of Tennessee Special Collections Library. According to the results of the survey, most of the identified volumes had some damage; there was damage to the bindings, torn end sheets, damaged spines, loose pages and hinges, broken text blocks, missing covers, and red rot leather. Environmental damage was substantial compared to patron damage

(Starmer, McGough, Leverette, 2005; Oinam and Thoidingjam, 2019). The researchers strongly suggested that the University prioritise renovations of the special collection library. According to Oinam and Thoidingjam (2019), it is empirical that the custodian should adopt preventative measures rather than treating once anything has been destroyed. They added that manuscripts contain vital information and must be preserved and save for the future generations. After performing a microbial analysis, Hagaggi and Salah (2016) identified bacterial and fungal species that had attacked the manuscript “Resala fe alfaraeid”, stored in Al-Azhar Library, Cairo, Egypt. The above research makes clear the need to reassess current practices in ancient manuscript preservation.

## **METHODOLOGY**

A survey sheet adapted from Drijfhout (1999) was prepared to assess the manuscript. The manuscript was visually examined to determine the physical condition and deterioration found on the manuscript sheets. A total of five pages were sampled to identify the condition of the manuscript and document any traces of damage that appeared on the surface of the manuscript pages. An interview was conducted with the curator of the manuscript and a philology student for the purpose of gaining an understanding of the content of the text, which is summarised in the next heading.

## **FINDINGS**

This section explains the manuscript description of the Sujarah Banyumas in details that included five pages as a sample to identify the condition of the manuscript and document any traces of damage that appeared on the surface of the manuscript pages.

## **Manuscript Description**

The *Sujarah Banyumas* manuscript describes the history of Banyumas and is written in the form of a song (mocopat). This manuscript has never been transliterated or translated, and it has never been previously studied. It was written in the Javanese language using Javanese script. The exact date of composition is unknown, but based on separate notes found in the manuscript it is estimated that the text was written sometime in 1824-1825, or the year of Javanese (Djawi) 1743.

The manuscript consists of 120 pages (pages 1 through 120 are numbered) with two additional pages on the back sheet (these lack page numbering). Based on the identification results, it is conjectured that Ki Demang Surapeksana wrote the manuscript and that the owner of the manuscript was Raden Danubrama. However, it is also possible that two people wrote the *Sujarah Banyumas*, given the different writing styles observed on pages 1-69 and 70-120.

The text was written on two types of paper. Pages 1-69 use watermarked European paper, while the rest of the paper (pages 70-120 and the two pages in back) is thinner, of unidentified type, and lacks watermarking. The text was written in black ink, and there is an illustration (a house plan) on the last page. The cover of the manuscript is brown cardboard that is 1 mm thick, and leather coats manuscript's spine. The manuscript was sewn using the western style.

## **Manuscript Condition**

The manuscripts are stored vertically on wooden shelves in a storage room. This manuscript is wrapped in opaque paper. When measuring the room temperature (27 September 2021, 1.58 pm), it was noted to be 22.8°C with a relative humidity of 52%. The manuscript was fumigated and deacidified in September 2020. There were several small containers around the storage rack, variously filled with pieces of cloves, pieces of pandan leaf, vetiver root, and liquid whiting.

## **Manuscript Cover**

As previously described, the cover of the manuscript is brown cardboard that measures 1 mm thick, and leather coats the spine of the manuscript. The cover measures 33 cm in height and 19.8 cm in width. The cover is sandy and dusty in condition. Eight tape stains were identified on the front and back covers. Flea and termite bites were identified on the cover, and some parts of the cover had been peeled off.

## **Manuscript Sheets**

This study examined the first five pages of the manuscript. Each page had a gutter margin between 1 and 3 cm.

### **Page 1**

This sheet is 33 cm in height and 19.8 cm in width, with the left margin measuring 1.9 cm, the right margin 1 cm, the top margin 2.6 cm, and the bottom margin 2 cm. This sheet has a watermark. The text is still readable. Based on visual observation of the

sheet, it is determined that the surface sheet has tears and folds on some sides. The sheet looks fragile, wavy at the top, dusty, and sandy. The colour of the paper is browning. There is damage from termites and bookworms and traces of mould, soil, and water stains.

## **Page 2**

This sheet is 33 cm in height and 19.8 cm in width, with the left margin measuring 1.6 cm, the right margin 2.5 cm, the top margin 3 cm, and the bottom margin 2 cm. This sheet has a watermark. The text is still readable. Based on visual observation of the sheet, the surface sheet has discernible tears and folds on some sides. The sheet looks fragile, wavy at the top of the sheet, dusty, and sandy. The colour of the paper is browning. There is damage from termites and bookworms, traces of mould, soil, water stains, and highlighter marks.

## **Page 3**

This sheet is 33 cm in height and 19.8 cm in width, with the left margin measuring 2.2 cm, the right margin 1 cm, the top margin 2.8 cm, and the bottom margin 2.1 cm. This sheet has a watermark. The text is still readable. Based on visual observation of the sheet, the surface sheet has discernible tears and folds on some sides. The sheet looks fragile, wavy at the top, dusty, and sandy. The colour of the paper is browning. There is damage from termites and bookworms, traces of mould, soil, water stains, and pencil and highlighter marks.

#### **Page 4**

This sheet is 33 cm in height and 19.8 cm in width, with the left margin measuring 1 cm, the right margin 1.8 cm, the top margin 2.7 cm, and the bottom margin 2.5 cm. This sheet has a watermark. The text is still readable. Based on visual observation, the surface sheet has discernible tears and folds on some sides. The sheet looks fragile, wavy at the top, dusty, and sandy. The colour of the paper is browning. There is damage from termites and bookworms, traces of mould, soil, water stains, and pencil and highlighter marks.

#### **Page 5**

This sheet is 33 cm in height and 19.8 cm in width, with the left margin measuring 2.5 cm, the right margin 2.5 cm, the top margin 2.8 cm, and the bottom margin 2.5 cm. This sheet has a watermark. The text is still readable. Based on visual observation of the sheet, the surface sheet has discernible tears and folds on some sides. The sheet looks fragile, wavy at the top, dusty, and sandy. The colour of the paper is browning. There is damage from termites and bookworms, traces of mould, soil, water stains, and pencil and highlighter marks.

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

From the findings, it shows that *Sujarah Banyumas* manuscripts text still readable, even though there was a watermark at certain pages. It is also found that the surface sheet has discernible tears and folds on some sides. The damage was from termites and bookworms, traces of mould, soil, water stains, and pencil and highlighter marks and these was

considered as environmental damages. These findings are consistent and supported by Oinam and Thoidingjam, (2019) that various environmental conditions will harm manuscripts, and preventive measures should be used with caution and in a cost-effective manner. The results of the assessment of the *Sujarah Banyumas* manuscript show that its text is still readable despite the deterioration that is evident on some parts of the manuscript. This report suggests that the manuscript requires special care to maintain its physical condition. To ensure sustainable access to the textual content and to enhance the life span of the manuscript, digitisation of the manuscript must be implemented. This will allow researchers and others interested in studying the *Sujarah Banyumas* to access the information contained in it without causing further damage to the manuscript.

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