The Competences and Problems of Manuscripts Preservation

at National Library of Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

National Library of Indonesia has a diverse collection of manuscripts in terms of material, script and language. More than 10,000 titles, it takes a number of personnel with some competence for physical preservation and revealing the information contained therein. Therefore, we need people with certain qualifications required to be preservator of Library Material Preservation Center and philologist of Special Collection.

Through observation and interviews with a number of people who have been involved in the preservation and processing of the manuscripts, it is found that there are some problems with bottleneck effect. Starting from the amount of human resources who master the language contained in the manuscripts that is still inadequate, so manuscripts written with Bugis, Batak, and Kaganga and Buginese, Batak, Tontemboan, Nias and Madurese script cannot be transliterated. In addition, the physical preservation of the manuscripts require expertise to standardize certain competence but until now not many educational institutions provides courses to produce professionals in the field of preservation and philology, compared with a doctor or teacher profession. Another problem is the Civil Servants recruitment process is still too bureaucratic and the process puts more priority to the academic degree rather than to skill or competence. This condition should be anticipated soon because many local languages are endangered due to the declining presence of native speakers.

National Library of Indonesia together with relevant agencies need to sit together to understand the urgency of the existing conditions so that human resources recruitment with the required competences can be done as soon as possible with a more flexible mechanism. Another alternative effort that can be done is that National Library of Indonesia assembling research consortium involving universities and traditional authorities in accordance with origin culture used in the manuscripts. Thus Spake expected manuscripts processing is not only at the stage of transliteration and editing text but also to translational and text analysis stage.

Keywords: Manuscript, Preservation, preservator, philologist, National Library of Indonesia.
1. INTRODUCTION

Manuscripts are historical heritage of our ancestors because they recorded the achievements of their thinking in the past. Manuscripts are written documents that are not printed or reproduced in any other way, either in the country or abroad which are at least fifty years old, and that have significance for national culture, history and science (Library Act No. 43 of 2007, Chapter I, Article 1). Manuscripts and rare collections are cultural heritage that have concrete form, manuscripts and rare collections are often categorized as objects of cultural heritage (tangible) and require special handling because they are easily damaged.

![Manuscript Collection](image1)

Figure 1: The manuscripts collection of National Library of Indonesia

The number of manuscripts that exist in Indonesia is still not known for certain. Their presence are scattered in various places. Most collected by libraries and museums but many are still in the possession of certain community. Our concern of the manuscripts which are in the possession of certain community is that not only they are the target of foreign collectors but also their vulnerable physical conditions. Many are not well maintained and eventually destroyed so their contents cannot be understood anymore.

A library that collects a large number of manuscripts is National Library of Indonesia. By Act No. 43 of 2007, National Library of Indonesia is obliged and responsible to preserve and care for the manuscripts. In the Act, it is explained that the task associated with manu-
scripts, such as, (1) converting manuscripts owned by the community (into digital form) to be conserved and utilized (Article 9); and identifying and attempting the return of the manuscripts which are abroad (Article 21).

Now National Library of Indonesia has been collecting manuscripts of nearly 10,000 titles from different regions. The manuscripts of National Library of Indonesia originated from the museum collection of Bataviaasch van Kunsten en Wetenschap Genootschappen, an association of intellectual elite that was found in 1778. Most of the museum's collection are various types of library materials made in Indonesia and overseas, both published in Indonesia and abroad since the 16th century, collected under the Act of Deposit issued by the Dutch East India Government.

The manuscripts contain values that cover various aspects of community life as a picture of human life in the past and our culture. These values are informing us of the extent of their thinking, achievement and culture. The manuscripts are generally in the form of a handwritten book or paper roll. Manuscript contains a complete story and is usually more in length, anonymous and not known the exact year of its production. Speaking of manuscripts, it means that talking about information, because manuscripts have priceless value, both in terms of historical aspects of the text and content of information contained in the text. Written on palm leaf, bark, rattan, bamboo and paper, these written heritage is valued for both their intellectual content and physical beauty. As source of local history, manuscripts have become the pride or symbol of the past greatness of Indonesia. The content of the manuscripts provides answers to today or future generations’ needs (Alfida, 2012).

Special Collections Division is responsible for managing the collection of manuscripts, National Library of Indonesia seeks to realize the nation’s cultural heritage preservation efforts through research, assessment and dissemination of the noble values contained therein. Knowledge and information need to be introduced to the general public, especially to the younger generation so as not to be constantly buried. The manuscripts collection of National Library of Indonesia contains a variety of information, among others: literature, fairy tales, philosophy, language, art, puppets, education, customs, health, astronomy, religion, law, history, medicine, technology and architecture. Manuscripts collection of National Library of Indonesia is very diverse both in terms of material, scripts and language.

Table 1: Diversity of manuscripts collection of National Library of Indonesia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Script</th>
<th>Language</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palm Leaves</td>
<td>Javanese</td>
<td>Old Javanese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bone</td>
<td>Pegan</td>
<td>Bugis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Metal</td>
<td>Kaganga</td>
<td>Batak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tree Bark</td>
<td>Batak</td>
<td>Parsi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bamboo</td>
<td>Bugis</td>
<td>Malay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gendong Paper/Tela</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sundanese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Balinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Acehnese</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tontemboan</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nias</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dutch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Madurese, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within the scope of the library, preservation is the organisation and programming of all kinds of activities regarding conservation of the collections in general. Conservation is a concept that includes preventive conservation which aims to reduce risks of deterioration: environmental control, regular maintenance and protection of the collections by using appropriate
treatment, anti-theft devices and creating surrogate documents for heavily-used original documents. In addition, it is also necessary to implement restoration as an advanced stage after conservation with certain techniques so that the physical condition is preserved and is sturdy. The technique used depends on the condition of manuscript, because each physical damage needs to be dealt with different ways. The damage of the manuscripts is also various, depending on the cause and type of damage. Steps to perform restoration of manuscript, among others:

1) Cleaning and fumigation.
2) Coating with special paper (doorslagh) on the sheet of vulnerable manuscript.
3) Fixing the broken manuscript sheet with archival material.
4) Storing in a safe place (cupboard).
5) Storing in the air-conditioned rooms with regulated air temperature.

Various efforts for the preservation of the manuscript need to be done. In the context of science, the study of manuscripts as a form of human civilization of the past that can be understood at the present time has been named as a new science, that is philology. Philology is the science of examining the legacy of classic texts of the past to dig up "treasures" hidden in the text form. The treasures contained in manuscript reflect the ideas, thought patterns, or formulas life lessons that have been achieved by our predecessors. Thus, philology is the science that connects our solid foundation in the past with the present and the future in order to improve the quality of our life (as a nation that has such a long history).

So, human resources (HR) with the competence as a philologist is absolutely necessary, because to be able to understand the content of the information contained in the collection of manuscript required special ability to read the script and language. The objectives of this study are to determine the competences required for the manuscripts preservation at National Library of Indonesia and to examine the problems faced by National Library of Indonesian in carrying out the manuscripts preservation.

2. **RESEARCH METHODS**

To gain an understanding of the effort to preserve the manuscript collections of National Library of Indonesia, the research is conducted through observation and interviews and reviewing analysis preservation policy of manuscripts at National Library of Indonesia. Interviews were conducted with five people who have been involved in the preservation and processing of the manuscripts. Two of them are from the Library Materials Preservation Centre and three are from the Special Collection Service.

3. **PRESERVATION OF THE MANUSCRIPTS**

The purpose of preservation will not be separated from policy objectives and relation to preservation of library materials. According Dureau and Clements (1990) in Fatkurohman (2008), the purpose of conservation policy is formulated as follows: (a) preserving scientific information content recorded and transferred to other media; and (b) preserving the original physical form of library and archival materials that can be used in the fullest possible form. While according Sulisty o Basuki (1991) goal of the library materials preservation is to preserve library materials with information content and convert to other media or preserve their original form as completely as possible so as to be used optimally.
Based on the policy objectives of preservation according to Clements that to preserve the original physical form of library and archival materials that can be used in the fullest possible form and transferred to any other forms as required preventive measures by preservator. Preservator is responsible for the physical manuscripts preservation to prevent further damage and convert the manuscripts into digital form or to any micro form. This activity is carried out by the Special Collection Service in coordination with the Library Materials Preservation Centre for conservation and restoration.

Besides that, to preserve the content of scientific information philologist with a special ability is needed to perform a variety of the manuscripts transliteration even to manuscript editing script and language are almost extinct. This activity is the effort of National Library of Indonesia to empower the existing manuscripts so that its content can be used and preserved as a highly valuable nation creation and timeless cultural heritage for future generations.

4. CHALLENGES IN MANUSCRIPTS PRESERVATION

Table 1 mentioned the diversity of material, script and language in manuscript collection of National Library of Indonesia. It becomes an evidence of the State of Indonesia wealth that is still original and required to be maintained and preserved its existence because of the historical and cultural exota is a valuable asset that will be a legacy for future generations. In an effort to fulfill that purpose, it takes cooperation and concern from all. Resources competent to manage it, is absolutely necessary. Unfortunately, the resources owned by National Library of Indonesia at both Special Collection Service and Library Materials Preservation Centre who are involved in the manuscripts preservation still limited. At the Special Collection Services, its resources have the ability to read the script and translate certain areas. The number of human resources is as many as 12 people and with the competences mastered is reading Arabic, ancient Javanese, Javanese, Sundanese and Balinese script and translating Arabic, Old Javanese, Javanese, Malay, Sundanese, and Dutch. The manuscripts that can be transliterated and edited in one year-average is 8 publications, each consisting of 120-300 pages. This amount is still far from expectations if you see the collection of manuscripts of National Library of Indonesia that consists of nearly 10,000 pieces.

In the meantime, collection of manuscripts with other scripts and language are still undiscovered of their information content, such as the manuscripts with Batak and Bugis script and language which are quite many in Javanese and Arabic. These concerns grow when the results showed that native speakers of regional languages is decreasing every year and almost extinct.

Recruiting human resources as philologist with the necessary competence still continue to be pursued by National Library of Indonesia by opening job vacancy. Because manuscripts with Batak and Bugis script and language are the most of manuscripts that have not been processed, currently it is being prioritized to find philologist with competence to read and translate Bugis and Batak script, but in the last two years no one has been interested. This recruitment condition needs to be evaluated by National Library of Indonesia next year.

In the Library Materials Preservation Centre, preservator are not only responsible to preserve the manuscripts but also another collection of library materials such as old newspapers, magazines, rare books, maps, microfilms and recordings collection. Conditions of the manuscripts damage very unfortunate needs a special treatment of a preservator with special competences. Indonesia is a tropical country with humidity range of about 70% - 90% and the surface temperature of about 23°C - 28°C, causing collection condition deteriorated. It is found that many damage occurred because of fungus growth, ink corrosion, vinegar syndrome, insects and fragility due to age. Environmental factor has a major role in determining the condition of the collection. In countries with tropical climates such as Indonesia, the tem-
perature level fluctuations and high humidity cause accelerating deterioration and lead to such visible damage. To prevent further damage to the manuscripts as a result of environmental factors, National Library of Indonesia has provided adequate space and equipment so the temperature and humidity are controlled.

5. OBSTACLES

The manuscripts existence is tended to be ignored often and only get the attention of a certain group of people, especially of the philologist and librarian, when in fact this script saves the very broad meaning and dimensions because it is the product of a long tradition that involves various cultural attitudes of society in certain period.

Ministry of Education (2008) reported that there were more than 746 languages in Indonesia and around 20 languages currently in use in manuscript collections of National Library of Indonesia. To find native speakers of the language of the text is more difficult and the condition is experienced by many local languages in Indonesia. The number of native speakers is constantly reduced. Lots of local language are currently almost extinct because their users seldom use it in daily life. Today many young people are taught to speak Indonesian and foreign language even by the parents and not taught their mother tongue, so that makes them do not understand their mother tongue. Through the curriculum, the government is trying to anticipate this by incorporating local content that is by one local language lesson in primary and secondary education nationwide.

To preserve the manuscripts require an expert, trained and professional preservator and philologist with an adequate amount, not just the untrained human resources. The composition has to be proportional to the amount of the collection of manuscripts. But the profession in Indonesia is still relatively new and not many educational institutions provide courses to produce professionals in the field of preservation and philology compared with a doctor or teacher profession.

Two of the above conditions then become more complicated when the process of civil servants recruitment is still too bureaucratic and the process puts more priority to the academic degree rather than to skill or competence. Though we realize that educational institutions in Indonesia do not really accommodate the profession in the field of preservation, philologists are needed to process the legacy of manuscripts that have significance for national culture, history and science. In Indonesia, universities are still opening philological study programs that only provide a concentration in the local languages that still have a lot of native speakers, such as Javanese, Sundanese, Batak, Bugis, Balinese, Minang and others but not local language that almost extinct.

Meanwhile, to provide professional human resources in preservation field, until now there is no certification for the field of library materials and manuscript preservation. This effort as a form of standardization for preservator competence to minimize the risk of mishandling in preserving the manuscripts. Competences required for a preservator is the ability in assessing the type of the damage and determine the treatment required and implement manuscripts preservation procedures.

6. CONCLUSION

The existence of a collection of manuscripts at National Library of Indonesia is a valuable asset as the ancestral heritage and achievement evidence of the Indonesian people thought in the past. Its preservation is very important because manuscripts contain values that cover various aspects of community life as a picture of human life in the past and their culture. Manuscripts collection of National Library of Indonesia is very diverse in terms of ma-
terial, script and language so that the resources with special competence is absolutely necessary, for example the profession of preservator to preserve manuscripts for the physical matter and philologist for information content matter. Meanwhile there are also problems in effort to meet the competence human resource in the field of preservation is the absence of certification as professional competency standards preservator. Competency standards is particularly important given the general physical condition of the manuscripts is very fragile and needs caution in handling.

And then in the profession philologist who has the competence to read the script and translate the local language that nearly extinct is getting more difficult to obtain. The more variety of script and languages in the manuscripts also need more diversity competence to cultivate the manuscript. The manuscript processing relies heavily on the existence of philologists with appropriate competencies required script and language in the manuscripts. The decreasing number of native speakers of the local language also needs to be a serious concern for the government. Competence to read the Bugis, Batak and Kaganga script and translate Bugis, Batak, Malay, Acehnese, Tontemboan, Nias, and Madurenese have to be met. If not, the manuscripts with the script and the language cannot be utilized.

National Library of Indonesia together with the relevant agencies need to sit together to understand the urgency of the existing conditions so that the recruitment of resources with the required competencies can be done as soon as possible with a more flexible mechanism. The other alternative efforts that could be National Library of Indonesia is to assembling research consortium involving the universities and traditional authorities in accordance with origin culture used in the manuscripts. Thus it is expected the manuscripts processing not only at the stage of transliteration and editing text edition but also to translational and text analysis stage.

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