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Imagined Lasem's Manuscripts: A Mapping of Actors and Paradoxes in the Case of Museum Islam Nusantara

Ilham Ibnul Hakim^{1*}, *Nur Fauzan Ahmad*¹

¹Indonesian Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Diponegoro University Indonesia

Abstract. When manuscripts enters into the interest of common work of preservation, it is reimagined as something sovereign: imagined manuscripts. Using literature study and field study methods, this research is structured to map the actors and paradoxes that arise about the “imagined Lasem’s manuscripts” in the case of the Museum Islam Nusantara. Actor refers to parties actively involved in the joint work of manuscripts preservation. The network of relationships between actors is formed based on three things, namely interest, power, and sentiment. The results showed that each actor has his own interpretive truth according to his interests. However, power is not the sole factor that determines the success of manuscript preservation. Furthermore, the relationship of each truth presented by a number of individual actors creates paradoxes in terms of policy, management and institutions, and resources.

¹ Corresponding author: ilhamalhakim179h@gmail.com

1 Introduction

The development of studies and the rise of manuscript preservation movements gave rise to operational difficulties, and therefore also political problems, which increased for a number of interested sectors. On the one hand each method is consciously determined, so it becomes interventional, while on the other hand its users are bound by inevitable anthropological facts. In the government sector, the Perpustakaan Nasional is a preservation trustee [1], and therefore legally it has the capacity to determine the strategy to be used by the government in preserving manuscripts. But what is inevitable is that when the context of “government” is no longer narrowly understood in the reality of the Perpustakaan Nasional, it means that the strategy, whatever its form, is structured according to the interests of the big bureaucracy. The question is, are the existing strategies effective enough, or in other words, the government's manuscript preservation operations in the regions have no significant difficulties?

2 Research Method

This research focuses on mapping the actors and paradoxes that arise about the “imagined Lasem’s manuscripts” in the case of the Museum Islam Nusantara. Who are they and how is the network of relationships between actors formed? What kind of paradoxes arise in terms of policy, management and institutions, as well as resources? To find answers to these questions, the methods used in this study are 1) literature study; and 2) field studies, through *Halaqah Turats Nusantara* activities on November 20, 2022, at Masjid Jami’ Lasem, as well as a focus group discussion at the Museum Islam Nusantara, on May 17, 2023. The data obtained are then dialogued, then analyzed qualitatively-interpretively.

3 Result and Discussion

Manuscripts preservation projects by foreign financiers and civil societies mark two important phenomena connected in a paradoxical link. First, propaganda of the importance of manuscripts for a nation is progressive, meaning that national consciousness has grown in the layers of society. Second, the penetration of foreign interests and the independence of a less bureaucratic society reveal that the national strategy has not been well conceived. So what kind of curve can this circumstance show, to look at it from the perspective of national interests; positive or negative?

Clearly, what has been referred to above as “truth” appears to be the root of a number of operational difficulties in manuscripts preservation carried out by the Dinas Arsip dan Perpustakaan Provinsi Jawa Tengah at the Museum Islam Nusantara, Lasem, on May 17-19, 2023. The involvement of a number of parties from various sectors marks the “truth”, as it has been asserted, is no longer a single entity, but a compound, but has the same ultimate goal of achieving a “sustainable state”. Each truth correlates with a particular party, subject, or actor; And in that correlation, each tends to be claimed, defended, and confirmed as a unilateral rule of the game. That tendency has brought truth into interpretation, regardless of how it was discovered. When the manuscript reaches the hands of the parties with different truths, it becomes varied. The varied pattern itself brings the manuscript to an abstract sense. So when manuscripts goes into the interest of common work of preservation, it is reimagined as sovereign.

3.1 Mapping of Actors

The actors in this study refer to parties who are actively involved in joint work on the preservation of Lasem manuscripts at the Museum Islam Nusantara. The network of relationships between actors is formed based on three things, namely interest, power, and sentiment.

Table 1. Actors by sector, organization, and individual.

Sector	Organization	Individual
Civil Society	Management of Museum Islam Nusantara	Abdullah Hamid
Government	Dinas Arsip dan Perpustakaan Provinsi Jawa Tengah	Ahmad Budi Wahyono, Muhammad Saiful Alam
	Dinas Arsip dan Perpustakaan Kabupaten Rembang	Endhi Juniarno
	Dinas Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata Kabupaten Rembang	Mutaqin, Retna Dyah Radityawati
College	Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Diponegoro	Nur Fauzan Ahmad, Ilham Ibnul Hakim

The Museum Islam Nusantara was built, one of which is to preserve manuscripts from the Masjid Jami' Lasem Library collection. To achieve this goal, the manager has an interest in building cooperation

with universities, in addition to establishing communication with the Dinas Arsip dan Perpustakaan, as well as the Dinas Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata Kabupaten Rembang, as the holder of local government authority. However, universities, in this case philologists-academics of the Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Diponegoro initiated increased cooperation by cooperating with the Dinas Arsip dan Perpustakaan Provinsi Jawa Tengah, in order to strengthen bureaucratic aspects and to overcome resources deficits. Meanwhile, the three parties from the government sector have bureaucratic interests in manuscripts, so they are also interested in cooperating with universities as research and academic facilitators. However, Lasem's manuscripts is bound by the anthropological facts of the *santri*, certain approaches are needed to build its management as a cultural artifact, cultural heritage [2], as well as an object of cultural advancement [3]. Behind the interests and power, there is a basic emotional bond among actors that the preservation of manuscripts can only be done through joint work, because after all it requires a multi-sectoral role.

The anomaly is formed when the multi-sector role in the case is collectively examined through focus group discussion. The relationship of each truth presented by a number of individuals creates paradoxes.

4.1 Mapping of Paradoxes

4.1.1 Policy

What philologists understood as manuscripts was not understood similarly by the *santri* in Lasem. *Halaqah Turats Nusantara*, which was held to initiate the concept of the Museum Islam Nusantara on November 20, 2022, offers another understanding, namely “*turats*”. It comes from the term *turatsah* which means relic; it generally refers to everything left behind or inherited by *ulama*, including homes, struggles, and teachings (in the form of writing or other things that are passed down from generation to generation) [4]. Through the cultural scheme [5], it can be understood that actors need not only to attach importance to functional ideas in preservation, but also to realize the mythical and ontological mindset that prevails behind Lasem's manuscripts.

“That we saw the manuscripts was from, by, for the community. So, the manuscripts was present in the midst of society... That the manuscripts is a scholarly *sanad* ... That the scholarly tradition of the *santri* exists based on this manuscripts ... The *santri* saw that the manuscripts was spiritual. So it's not just a rational aspect. More than that, we have the spiritual spirit to save and preserve manuscripts... In

that community there is local wisdom, for example us. We understood from the beginning, the price of material value is extraordinarily high ... But we are not just material, structural. Can I tool. More than that, we are. Santri yes. So, care. We don't have to review studies. I take care, God willing, I get knowledge from the study. His blessing (?) ... I mean, the local wisdom of the community is high, so our approach to looking at the problems is not merely legal-formal. It's not like that. Sorry, there are sides of local wisdom that must be considered.” [6]

In the ontological mind, what Plato called *idea-idea* [5], has been equally demonstrated by *santri* and philologists, but with different *logos* or “meanings”. Something that on the one hand is understood as *turats* cannot be preserved with absolute philological tendencies, even if actors from universities have an interest in it. Therefore, actors from the government sector agreed with the management of the Museum Islam Nusantara not to publish the digital media transfer of certain manuscripts if the text is identified as containing errors that are considered potentially misleading “*ummah*”, unless accompanied by in-depth text criticism and contextualization studies.

Without preservation, sustainability and review of manuscripts are two functionally opposite things. The assessment process often begins with making direct contact with the manuscript, which certainly has the potential to interfere with its physical sustainability. Therefore, through the utilization of digital media transfer results, the sustainable state of manuscripts may be more sustainable.

4.1.2 Management and Institutions

Based on the Grand Design of Nusantara Manuscript Management 2020-2029 of the Perpustakaan Nasional in 2019, as many as 4.547 manuscripts in Jawa Tengah were successfully recorded [7]. Of these, in 2023, the Dinas Arsip dan Perpustakaan Provinsi Jawa Tengah is still trying to preserve at least one hundred manuscripts. The number really needs to be increased, considering that Jawa Tengah is one of the three provinces with the best number and management of human resources or conservationists, along with the Yogyakarta and Lampung; besides being together with Jawa Timur, the two provinces selected received assistance with preservation equipment [1]. There are at least five fundamental

problems in governance, namely 1) human resources; 2) community conditions; 3) acquisition of manuscripts; 4) lack of data; and 5) lack of interagency coordination [8].

In the case of Museum Islam Nusantara, the lack of coordination between institutions is shown by overlapping interests and powers which results in the emergence of new offers of truth that are evaluative (based on social agreement). Individuals from the Dinas Arsip dan Perpustakaan Kabupaten Rembang were surprised that part of the manuscripts collection in 2022 had been digitized through research collaboration with philologist-academics from the Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Diponegoro. When the Dinas Arsip dan Perpustakaan Provinsi Jawa Tengah conducts preservation activities in 2023, there is a miscoordination between the province and the district that procedurally “eliminates” the interests of local government authorities. As compensation as well as conflict mitigation efforts, the individual offers a number of truths, namely, 1) if the provincial government knows the existence of manuscripts in the district area, then he needs to contact the district government; 2) universities have research capacity but do not have the capacity to digitize manuscripts; 3) digitalization capacity is owned by the government sector with a record of meeting ISO standards, qualified human resources, and available infrastructure; 4) the first interest in manuscripts is digitization, so philologists are directed to access digitized results, in order to reduce physical contact with manuscripts; 5) students need to coordinate with government authorities to research manuscripts; 6) There must be certain conditions met by the university in researching manuscripts.

In the context of the museum, the Lasem’s manuscripts is also under the interest of the Dinas Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata Kabupaten Rembang. Therefore, it will also be managed as a museum collection. Yet if so it is understood as part of preservation, then the sustainable state of the manuscripts itself becomes paradoxical. On the one hand, museuming is an effort to save manuscripts from uncontrollable situations in society. On the other hand, the display of manuscripts in museums is an act that has the potential to damage the physical aspects and freeze the research significance of the text. As a solution, as offered by individuals from the Dinas Arsip dan Perpustakaan Provinsi Jawa Tengah, manuscripts collections need to be replicated. The original

manuscript was conserved in a special place and research was carried out on it.

4.1.3 Resources

In terms of personnel, the management of the Museum Islam Nusantara requires the role of philologists. According to its function, philology is the opening door for the study of more complex manuscript content. Culturally entrenched *tahqiq* activities among *santri*, including in Lasem, are methodologically connected with textual criticism which is at the core of philological activities, because a work can be called finished *tahqiq* if it has the correct title, the correct name of the author, and can be accounted for the closeness of the text (*matn*) to the version written by the author himself [9].

Philologist-academician of the Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Diponegoro and parties in the government sector both need the role of the civil society sector, both for research and bureaucratic purposes. The management of the Museum Islam Nusantara not only provides material aspects in the form of its manuscripts collection, but also connects the interests of each actor to the anthropological facts of the *santri* that prevail in Lasem. Meanwhile, regarding facilities and infrastructure, the Dinas Arsip dan Perpustakaan Provinsi Jawa Tengah is the only actor who is able to provide physical preservation tools for manuscripts of Perpustakaan Nasional standards, in addition to having text preservation personnel (philologists).

The Dinas Arsip dan Perpustakaan Kabupaten Rembang is bureaucratically the local government authority with a direct interest in the preservation of Lasem's manuscripts. However, the needs of man and machine aspects for now can only be met through cooperation mechanisms. The Dinas Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata Kabupaten Rembang has an interest in aspects of museums and cultural heritage. They provide archaeologists, but to further the interest of manuscript study, it is necessary to cooperate with philologists.

4.1.4 Thought Experiment

Each actor has his own interpretive truth according to his interests. But that power is not the sole factor that determines the success of manuscripts preservation in the Museum Islam Nusantara. Thus, all

truths, whether discovered through authoritarian, mystical, logical-rational, or scientific means, ultimately need to be discussed. In the discussion, it is undeniable that for the sake of progress, moderation of various interests is needed. Moderation does not mean that interpretive truth is invalidated by interests. However, pragmatic constraints in preservation operations are minimized as much as possible, because joint work between sectors is the only realistic way to bring manuscripts to a sustainable state, according to various aspects, and for the fulfillment of multi-sector interests.

5 Conclusion

The so-called “truth” appears to be at the root of a number of operational difficulties in manuscripts preservation carried out at the Museum Islam Nusantara, Lasem, on May 17-19, 2023. The involvement of a number of parties from various sectors marks the “truth” is no longer a single entity. On the other hand, the network of relationships between actors is formed based on three things, namely interest, power, and sentiment. The relationship of each truth presented by a number of individual actors creates paradoxes in terms of policy, management and institutions, and resources.

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