



## **Ancient Manuscript Textology in the Archipelago: A Comparative Analysis of Objects, Languages, and Methods in Philological Studies**

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### **Abstract**

The urgency of this research is to preserve and understand the manuscripts of the archipelago's heritage, which contain a wealth of historical, religious, and cultural values. This research aims to present a textological approach in examining the diversity of ancient manuscripts in Indonesia and their significance for the preservation of local cultural heritage. The research was conducted using qualitative methods, including literature studies that employed a textual approach, such as inventorying, manuscript description, classification, comparison, and textual criticism, to determine the original manuscript. The analysis focused on the structure, language, social context, and cultural values in each manuscript. The study's results reveal complex functions, with a predominance of Islamic elements, as evidenced by the use of Arabic and Arabic-Malay. In addition, contributions from local scripts and languages such as Old Javanese were also found, which reinforce the diversity of the archipelago's manuscripts. Linguistic diversity is a characteristic of the ancient manuscripts studied in this research, including those in Arabic, Javanese, Sundanese, Ulu, and Malay. The diversity of scripts and functions of manuscripts. The heterogeneity of scripts and functions of manuscripts requires the strengthening of textology, which is measured by uniform transliteration, editing notes, and computer collation so that the determination of the master manuscript is more effective and accurate. Thus, for preservation and utilization, prioritize risk-based conservation (including iron-ink manuscripts), digitize minor manuscripts to maintain a balanced collection, align data with the national registry through digitization, and use the results as open learning resources and to strengthen literacy.

**Keywords:** comparative analysis; languages; manuscript; philological studies; textology.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Manuscripts are historical documents that originate from past cultures and contain valuable information that can be reviewed from both historical and content perspectives (Mari, 2024). Rahmi & Aprida (2023) define manuscripts as documents in any form that are

more than 50 years old and have significant historical and cultural value.

Muna (2024) emphasizes manuscripts as cultural resources that are the wealth of society, while Dicky & Yusro (2020) include them as part of Javanese cultural heritage. The presence of ancient manuscripts is concrete evidence of the development of civilization,

reflecting the society's identity and the intellectual and spiritual achievements of the era.

Manuscripts have been discovered in many countries, including Indonesia, which is renowned for its rich collection of ancient manuscripts (Faar, 2023). These manuscripts are written in various scripts and languages that reflect cultural diversity and levels of civilization (Gimnastiyar, 2025). However, many of them have not been optimally studied in terms of content, context, and text structure.

To explore the contents of manuscripts in depth, a study of textual criticism, a branch of philology that examines the process of transmission, transformation, interpretation, and meaning of texts, is required (Khozinul, 2023). This study not only attends to the physical form and language but also to the relationship between the text, the author, and the socio-historical context of its creation, thereby enabling the reconstruction of the text's meaning and function in its original culture (Alfiyah, 2024).

According to Baried (1985), textual studies are not merely the science of the intricacies of texts, but a comprehensive, systematic, and chronological study of the history of manuscripts. Texts are always related to the context of their emergence; therefore, tracing the historical elements of age, material, language, writing style, and character of letters is key to understanding manuscripts (Baried, 1985).

The textological approach allows for the reconstruction of texts that are close to their original form, as well as the exploration of their historical, philosophical, and cultural value.

Strengthening this study is important for the preservation of ancient manuscripts in Indonesia, as well as the development of a philological approach to language and literature studies. This study aims to present a textological approach in examining the diversity of ancient manuscripts in Indonesia, as well as their significance for the preservation of local cultural heritage.

The novelty of this research does not only lie in the use of a philological approach, as research on the Jalālayn interpretation manuscript has actually been conducted by several researchers before, including Saadah (2019), who emphasized the importance of intertextuality studies in understanding the interrelationship of meanings in the interpretation text. Meanwhile, this research has a different focus, as it expands the study of textuality by examining the relationship between texts (intertextuality), revealing the symbolic meanings used in writing, and explaining the social and cultural backgrounds that influenced the copying of manuscripts.

Therefore, this study is expected to provide new insights into the tradition of philological interpretation, particularly in tracing the relationship between texts, culture, and the historical development of Islam in the archipelago. Specifically, this study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of the objects, languages, and methods used in the textual studies of ancient Nusantara manuscripts; trace the patterns of intertextual relationships between manuscripts; identify the symbolic meanings that emerge in the practice of copying; and explain the socio-cultural contexts that shape the process of text

transmission and transformation in the Nusantara philological tradition.

## METHOD

Analysis of ancient manuscripts revealed that the articles were then grouped based on theme, approach used, type of manuscript studied, and focus of textual analysis. According to Ridwan et al. (2021), one of the advantages of this method is its ability to provide a strong foundation for constructing arguments and explaining the development of theoretical thinking in a field.

By conducting a literature review, researchers can avoid duplicating studies and, conversely, make new contributions by combining various pieces of information more comprehensively. In this study, reviewing various philology journals became an important starting point for assessing the extent to which textual studies have developed in the study of ancient manuscripts, both in Indonesia and other countries.

The data obtained from various references is not only used as supporting material but also as an object for critical analysis. The application of the literature review method also helps researchers reach a broader and more varied range of information sources.

To maintain the accuracy of the data in the literature review, researchers carefully verify the sources to ensure the integrity of the information. In the analysis process, researchers also strive to remain objective by not only using data that support the main argument but also considering different or even conflicting findings. This approach is

crucial to ensure the study is not biased and reflects a comprehensive view.

Overall, the literature review method in this study was not only used as a technical tool for collecting data, but also as an in-depth scientific approach. This method helped researchers gain a deeper understanding of how textology theory is applied in the study of ancient manuscripts, while also demonstrating that such studies play a role in preserving the intellectual values of the past.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Traditionally, the field of textual criticism focuses on the process of tracing and examining changes or reductions in texts, starting from autographic texts (original manuscripts written directly by the author), apographic texts (clean copies made by copyists), and the process of interpreting and understanding these texts (Sati et al., 2025).

In philological studies, the textological approach is a crucial method that enables researchers to trace the formation, development, and transmission of a text over time.

In this process, two main aspects need to be considered: the manuscript object and the language used in it. Each manuscript has its own uniqueness, both in terms of content and style, which influences the way researchers conduct textual analysis. From the four articles reviewed in this study, it is evident that the textual method is employed in various ways, depending on the linguistic context and the type of manuscript that serves as the focus of the study.

The study conducted by Saadah (2019) on the Jalalayn Tafsir manuscript from Karangasem, Sedan Rembang, is an excellent example of how religious texts in Arabic Malay can be adapted when used in a local context. This study explains that the Jalalayn text does not stand alone, but is closely related to several other tafsir books, such as *al-Bayāwī*, *Tafsīr al-Qurūbi*, *Tafsīr al-āwī*, and *Mafāti al-Ghayb*.

Interestingly, the main text written in Arabic is accompanied by grammatical explanations in Javanese called *makna gandhul*, such as the following example:

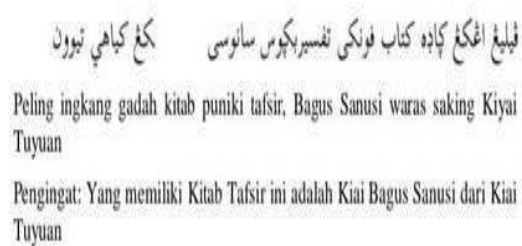


Figure 1

This explanation is inserted between lines of Arabic text to help students understand the meaning more easily. The textological approach in this study is more directed at the process of intertextuality.

Based on the above data, there is evidence of language and cultural adaptation to facilitate understanding among the local community.

This study demonstrates that the method of textual analysis has a highly flexible application, depending on the type of manuscript and the language used.

In religious manuscripts, the primary focus tends to be on textual accuracy, reading systems, and the structure of writing. Conversely, in literary manuscripts and official

letters, more attention is devoted to the style of delivery, linguistic symbolism, and the communication strategies employed. Arabic, Malay, and a combination of the two all play a significant role in conveying complex meanings and reflect the cultural interactions and thoughts of the people of that era.

### Analysis of Ancient Manuscript Research Objects

#### Religious Manuscripts

This category is the most dominant, driven by the strong influence of Islam in Indonesia's intellectual history. These manuscripts are not merely texts, but windows that reveal how religious understanding has developed over time.

Saadah (2019), for example, examines the *Tafsīr Jalālayn* Manuscript. This research not only describes a text, but also highlights the existence of an established tradition of tafsir learning in Rembang in the 19th century, much earlier than previously thought. This changes our understanding of the chronology of Islamic education in the region.

Fathurrofiq (2019) conducted a textual analysis of the *Mushaf* of Ibn Mas'ud. Efforts to validate and revalidate the history of the Quran emphasize the crucial importance of the *isnad* system, a reliable chain of transmission that preserves the authenticity of Islamic teachings. Previous scholars have cultivated this system.

In a more modern realm, there is also a focus on regional variations of the Quran. Khozinul (2023) researched the *Madura Mushaf*, enriching the spectrum of *mushaf* studies in Indonesia, while Fikriyyah (2024) delved into the *Digital Manuscript* of the *Yemeni Mushaf*. Digital manuscripts are not

just files, but visual treasures with beautiful calligraphic symbols (thuluth, thumun, hizb, rubu', sajdah), markers for juz transitions, and precise tajwid instructions.

### **Literary and Cultural Manuscripts**

Textology also reveals the richness of literature and culture. These manuscripts capture the imagination, values, and perspectives of society. Novitasari and Wirajaya (2021) researched the Naskah Syair Kupu-kupu, a work commissioned by a German collector. This research not only identified the manuscript but also revealed how the Malay community employed symbolism in poetry to "hide" or disguise topics considered taboo, a clever cultural strategy.

Alfiyah (2024) conducted a textological study of the Lakon Wayang Abimanyu Gugur. It demonstrates how the rich Javanese oral tradition can be preserved in written form, making it a relevant object of research for understanding classical narratives and the values they contain.

### **Historical and Social Manuscripts**

These manuscripts serve as silent witnesses to history, offering concrete descriptions of past events, interactions, and social structures. (Aminuddin, 2021) analyzes a letter to Raffles from the end of British rule in Indonesia (1816). This study is not just about a piece of paper, but a "snapshot" that provides direct insight into the political and social dynamics of the colonial era, revealing the interactions between the rulers and the local community.

(Anida, Kalsum, & Otoman, 2021)  
Examine Manuscript Collection Box 91/E6.

This manuscript, which discusses the laws and conditions for finding a spouse through intermediaries (Rasulullah and Prisiy), is an interesting reflection of the social and legal aspects that prevailed in traditional society, showing the norms of marriage in the past.

### **Local Languages of the Archipelago**

Textological research covers manuscripts written in the vernacular languages of the archipelago, affirming Indonesia's linguistic and sociocultural richness. (Alfiyah, 2024) analyzes Javanese manuscripts in Lakon Wayang Abimanyu Gugur, which documents the richness of Javanese oral traditions in written form.

Fauziyah & Gantina (2022) examine the Naskah Tiga Ajñana, written in Old Sundanese. This research underscores the importance of preserving the ancient languages of the Archipelago, which possess substantial historical and cultural significance.

Furthermore, Anida, Kalsum, and Mursyid (2021) analyzed manuscripts using Aksara Ulu, a traditional writing system from South Sumatra. This study shows the diversity of writing systems and languages used in the archipelago's manuscript corpus.

### **Analysis of Methods and Approaches Used in Textology**

#### **Methods and Approaches in Textual Research**

Based on an analysis of the reviewed studies, it can be observed that the methodology in textual studies generally adopts a descriptive-analytical approach. This method is fundamentally divided into two main

categories, namely manuscript research methods and text criticism methods.

The stages in the manuscript research method include manuscript inventory, manuscript description, manuscript classification, manuscript comparison, determination of manuscript genealogy or stemma, and determination of the base manuscript. This approach demonstrates the level of systematization and precision essential in textual research to produce comprehensive and accurate studies.

The research method is qualitative. The method used in the study "Intertextual Study in Tafsir Manuscripts Jalālayn Karangasem Sedan Rembang" is a qualitative intertextual approach. This study highlights intertextual studies in several ancient manuscripts.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the textological approach plays a crucial role in examining the diversity of Indonesian manuscripts, which encompass a range of texts, including religious, literary, historical, and local cultural texts. These manuscripts are not only considered as written documents, but also as reflections of the social, political, and spiritual values of the communities that produced them.

The differences in form, content, and function of the manuscripts demonstrate that the textological approach is capable of adapting to the character and context of each text.

From a linguistic perspective, the dominance of Arabic and Arabic-Malay manuscripts shows the strong influence of Islam in the tradition of manuscript writing in

the archipelago. Meanwhile, the existence of manuscripts in local languages, such as Javanese, Old Sundanese, and Ulu script, also highlights the richness and diversity of Indonesia's cultural heritage, which deserves further research and preservation.

The methodology commonly used in these studies is a descriptive-analytical approach that includes systematic stages such as inventory, description, classification, text criticism, and determination of the basic manuscript.

Thus, textual studies serve not only as a means of analyzing manuscripts but also as an important medium for reviving the historical and cultural values contained therein. This approach has great potential for application in the study of digital manuscripts, the preservation of regional languages and scripts, and the development of interdisciplinary studies that link philology with other fields, such as anthropology and history.

This research presents a literature review of previous studies to examine the objects of study, languages, and methods used in ancient manuscripts. Through the application of a textological approach, analysis of ancient manuscripts is easily carried out. Therefore, this research can identify the objects of study and methods.

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