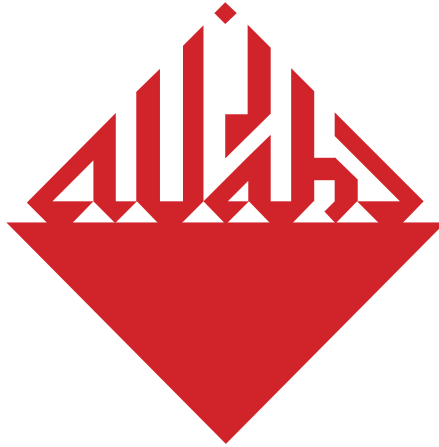


STUDIA ISLAMIKA

INDONESIAN JOURNAL FOR ISLAMIC STUDIES

Volume 16, Number 3, 2009



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STUDIA ISLAMIKA

Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies

Vol. 16, no. 3, 2009

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STUDIA ISLAMIKA (ISSN 0215-0492) is a journal published by the Center for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM) UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta (STT DEPPEN No. 129/SK/DITJEN/PPG/STT/1976). It specializes in Indonesian Islamic studies in particular, and South-east Asian Islamic Studies in general, and is intended to communicate original researches and current issues on the subject. This journal warmly welcomes contributions from scholars of related disciplines.

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STUDIA ISLAMIKA has been accredited by The Ministry of National Education, Republic of Indonesia as an academic journal (SK Dirjen Dikti No. 83/Dikti/Kep/2009).

Document

Thesaurus of Indonesian Islamic Manuscripts (T2IM): An effort to develop a comprehensive database for academic purposes

Oman Fathurahman

The last two decades has shown an increase in activities in, including preservation, cataloguing, and digitizing, and research of Indonesian manuscripts. Both national and international institutions dedicated to this field apparently strive to take a lead in this issue and to gain access to Indonesian manuscripts.

At the end of the 1990s, the Ford Foundation was certainly considered a leading international funding agency that greatly contributed to the preservation of Indonesian manuscripts mainly through microfilm and microfiche projects and by funding scholarship. Since the early 2000s, a Japanese agency, the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (TUFS) represented by the Center for Documentation of Area-Trans Cultural Studies (C-DATS) and supported by the Toyota Foundation, has been involved in digitizing and cataloguing projects of Indonesian manuscripts kept in such areas as Palembang (Ikram [ed.] 2004), Minangkabau (Yusuf [ed.] 2006), Aceh (Fathurahman & Holil 2007), Ali Hasjmy and Tanoh Abee, Aceh (Fathurrahman[ed.] 2010). Their publications have undoubtedly been important contributions to increased research interest among Indonesian researchers and students in the study of local historical documents.

Since early 2008, Leipzig University --collaborating with such institutions as the Aceh State Museum, the Ali Hasjmy Foundation, the Research Centre for Education and Society (PKPM), and the Indonesian Association for Nusantara Manuscripts (Manassa)-- has conducted a digitizing project and has developed an online digital

library of Indonesian, particularly Acehese, manuscripts. The Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO) in Jakarta also plays a vital role in facilitating publications of research findings on Indonesian manuscripts. Likewise, all of them have greatly motivated researchers to do more research and to make old, local documents, which were previously very difficult to find easily accessible to the public.

Considering the fact that the contents of many Indonesian manuscripts are greatly influenced by Islam, manuscript studies have positively affected developments and trends in Indonesian Islamic studies. Previously, many researchers on Indonesian Islam merely relied on foreign ethnographies (from the Middle East and the West/Europe). Now, they have alternative sources at their disposal which are authentic, important, and, most importantly, mostly untouched.

The fact that various state institutions responsible for Islamic studies and religious affairs have recently taken important initiatives is encouraging. The Center for Research and Development of Religious Literatures (Puslitbang Lektur Keagamaan), Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA), for instance, is now one of the institutions in a top position in conducting a variety of projects related to Indonesian manuscripts, including workshops, trainings, manuscripts inventories, research, etc.

This is also the case with higher Islamic educational institutions. Previously, the trend of research on Islam was on global and contemporary issues, but now, there is an increasing number of academic works in the form of BA, MA, and Ph.D. theses, on local Islam that have used manuscripts as their primary sources. Moreover, since 2009, the Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University (UIN) Jakarta has carried out graduate programs in philology that put emphasis on Indonesian Islamic manuscripts.

Here, however, a big problem emerges. Imagine a large number of manuscript researchers who enter a very rich "primary forest" but who are lost due to poor inventory management. Compared to the Middle East Islamic area studies—which is much older and where the availability of works like *ṭabaqāt*, *fahāris*, and *ma'ājim* have been extremely helpful in identifying books, authors, place names, etc.-- the situation in Southeast Asian studies is nightmarish. One can spend weeks trying to find a clue on something mentioned in a manuscript without meeting

success. This of course discourages researchers and students to delve into Indonesian Islamic manuscripts.

Another problem is that up to now there is no comprehensive and authoritative reference on Indonesian Islamic manuscripts that have been, or are being, studied by in any form, both academic and non-academic. As a result, there has been no cross communication between researchers in this field. Sometimes it even happens that two researchers work on the same manuscript unknown to both.

This problem certainly needs to be solved and one solution is by making a database, which not only identifies all Indonesian Islamic texts produced since the 16th century, but also provides the names of their author, the languages and scripts in which they are written, places of collection, related catalogues, and relevant research so far conducted on these manuscripts. No doubt, such a database would certainly be very useful for philologists, historians, and researchers in the field of Indonesian Islamic studies.

To make it more useful for the broader academic community, the database will be available in English and will be called **Thesaurus of Indonesian Islamic Manuscripts (T2IM)**. Although it uses the term “Indonesian”, the database includes not only Indonesian Islamic manuscripts but also others from the Southeast Asian region (Nusantara) covering areas including Pattani in South Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Brunei Darussalam. The word “Indonesian” is chosen because most of the manuscripts are actually produced in, and originate from, Indonesia albeit copies are now kept in diverse institutions and libraries abroad.

Thesaurus of Indonesian Islamic Manuscripts (T2IM)

The majority of Indonesian manuscripts concern Islamic topics. Based on all catalogues compiled previously and all research conducted in the past, Islamic manuscripts are very significant in numbers and contain the history of Southeast Asian Islam, including biographies of ulamas and/or prolific authors of religious texts. These manuscripts are predominantly categorized as—using Braginsky’s words (1998: 275-276)—“Sastra Kitab,” religious texts which can be classified into Quranic exegesis (*tafsīr*), prophetic tradition (*ḥadīth*), Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Sufism, theology, etc.

The T2IM is a database designed by the Islamic Manuscript Unit (ILMU) of the Center for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM), Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University (UIN) and is fully supported by the Center for Research and Development of Religious Literatures (Puslitbang Lektur Keagamaan), Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs. During T2IM's development, it has obtained support from experts and researchers who specialize in Indonesian manuscripts and who are often officially affiliated with the Indonesian Association for Nusantara Manuscripts or MANASSA.

The T2IM is mainly intended to provide the public and for the academic community with information about Indonesian Islamic manuscripts as complete as possible, written both in Arabic and in local languages including Acehnese, Buginese, Javanese, Madurese, Malay, Minangkabau, Sasak, Sundanese, Wolio used in the written literary tradition in Indonesia. T2IM also provides other useful information like authors' names and biographical information, numbers of copies kept in all the libraries around the world, catalogues that list related manuscripts including numbers of pages and summaries, and all articles and books in which they are used.

The T2IM is of even greater importance because it will contain previously conducted research on manuscripts, as well as information on ongoing philological projects. If possible, these works are digitally available and may be downloaded. It is hoped that through this information unnecessary repetition in studying these texts can be avoided, but also that gaps found in previous studies can be filled.

The Significance of T2IM in the Development of the Intellectual Islamic Tradition in Southeast Asia

Southeast Asian Islamic Studies are certainly a very interesting, and of course important, field of study especially because of the large number of Muslims living in the region. To some extent, however, Islam in Southeast Asia remains to be considered peripheral because it is very much different from Islam in the Arabian Peninsula, North Africa, and Iran.

Referring to existing databases for the Islamic world, one gets the impression that Southeast Asian countries like Indonesia are not yet considered important Islamic regions. In fact, it is rarely known that Southeast Asian Muslims inherited a great written tradition that was

established since the 16th century and that the region is called the *cradle of Islam*. The written treasury created by ulamas and Muslim authors in the past are undoubtedly strong evidence that Southeast Asia can definitely be considered a world center for Islamic studies.

There are various factors why Southeast Asian Islam is less important in the global Islamic discourse. Firstly, there is a dichotomy between *central Islam* as developed in the Arab world and *peripheral Islam*, which is frequently considered a kind of *pseudo Islam*. Secondly, Southeast Asian Muslims have failed to provide information to the international scholarly community about the intensive research they conduct and Southeast Asian Islam is therefore not fully understood.

Various other factors of course may also be blamed as being responsible for discouraging scholars to study the Southeast Asian intellectual heritage. However, one thing is clear, there is no satisfactory research instrument available to scholars and researchers who wish to go deeper into the realm of Indonesian religious manuscripts.

Seen from this perspective, the T2IM database plays an important role as it will certainly become a vital source for philologists, historians, and scholars engaged in Southeast Asian Islamic Studies and keen to discover the characteristics of local Islam through the exploration of the works of ulamas from the past. Because T2IM provides as complete as possible related information about the existence of Indonesian religious manuscripts, it serves as a “gateway” for all scholars in Southeast Asian Islamic Studies before their actual research is started. The T2IM is not merely a catalogue. It constitutes a *catalogue of catalogues* of Indonesian Islamic manuscripts in a modern form with open-access to the public anytime and from anywhere.

Considering the huge number of Indonesian Islamic manuscripts preserved around the world, mounting to hundred thousand manuscripts and probably more, the T2IM is definitely a *lifetime project* in which all data will continuously be revised and updated in accordance with future research findings.

The Logics and Organization of T2IM

As stated above, one of T2IM’s main objectives is to provide information and data as complete as possible concerning Indonesian religious manuscripts. In order to achieve this target, T2IM needs to be systematically improved.

Until now, Indonesian manuscripts are largely kept in private and public institutions including libraries, museums, and foundations, both in Indonesia and abroad. Some manuscripts collections have been catalogued, however, most of them have not.

Initially, T2IM will draw upon printed catalogues as well as other lists of manuscripts and on other documentation. All publications containing lists of Indonesian religious manuscripts, whether they provide complete information or only titles, will be included in T2IM's database.

In this regard, the work entitled *Khazanah Naskah: Panduan Koleksi Naskah- Indonesia Sedunia* (World Guide to Indonesian Manuscript Collections) by Henri Chambert-Loir and Oman Fathurahman (1999) will be the first important reference since it is considered the most recent *catalogue of catalogues* of Indonesian manuscripts. Using this work, hundreds of manuscript catalogues as well as lists of manuscripts and other documentation written since the 19th century can easily be traced.

It should be noted that after the publication of *Khazanah Naskah*, various catalogues of Indonesian manuscripts have seen the light, such as *Katalog Naskah Buton Koleksi Abdul Mulku Zahari* (Catalogue of Buton Manuscripts collected by Abdul Mulku Zahari) by Achadiati Ikram, et al. (2002), *Katalog Naskah Palembang* (Catalogue of Palembang Manuscripts) by Achadiati Ikram, (ed.) (2004), *Katalog Naskah-naskah Perpustakaan Pura Pakualaman* (Catalogue of the Pakualaman Manuscript Library) by Sri Ratna Saktimulya (ed.) (2005), *Katalogus Manuskrip dan Skriptorium Minangkabau* (Catalogue of Minangkabau Manuscripts and Scriptorium) by M. Yusuf (ed.) (2006), *Katalog Naskah Ali Hasjmy Aceh* (Catalogue of Aceh Manuscripts: Ali Hasjmy Collection) by Oman Fathurahman and Munawar Holil (eds.) (2007), *Catalogue of Malay and Minangkabau Manuscripts in the Library of Leiden University and other collections in the Netherlands. Volume Two, comprising the H.N. van der Tuuk bequest acquired by the Leiden University in 1896* by Edwin Wieringa (2007), *Katalog naskah: Koleksi Masyarakat Keturunan Indonesia di Afrika Selatan* (Catalogue of Manuscripts collected by the Indonesian Descendants in South Africa) by Ahmad Rahman and Syahrial (2008), *Katalog Naskah Koleksi Masyarakat Keturunan Indonesia di Afrika Selatan* (Catalogue of Manuscripts in the Collections of Descendants from Indonesia in

South Africa) by Mukhlis PaEni (ed.), and *Katalog Naskah Tanoh Abee Aceh Besar* (Catalogue of Tanoh Abee Manuscripts in Aceh Besar) by Oman Fathurahman, et al. (forthcoming in 2010). All these catalogues definitely need to be used as authoritative and important references in the creation of T2IM.

The T2IM project will also trace academic works that use Indonesian Islamic manuscripts as their primary sources. The project will prioritize academic works, including BA, MA and PhD theses and other works that use a philological approach or philological research using interdisciplinary approaches. In the T2IM database, all these findings will be included in the description sections to the related texts. For this reason, all libraries, particularly in all Indonesian universities, and around the world in general, will certainly be targeted as the main locations for tracing efforts. Apart from this, the project will trace them through national and international journals on related subjects.

Various researches have identified the existence of Indonesian Islamic manuscripts in private collections. If possible, all information concerning these manuscripts will also be included in the T2IM database. Their existence cannot be guaranteed, however, since, badly preserved, they are usually vulnerable to theft, loss or even destruction.

Finally yet importantly, all these collected data will be put in an on-line database using well-designed software through which anyone will have access anytime and from any place.

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