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## **PARTICIPATING IN THE NATIONAL COLLABORATIVE DIGITAL LIBRARY OF MALAY MANUSCRIPTS**

### **Introduction**

Malay manuscripts have gained prominence over the years. A search on Google retrieved about 5,080 hits, all of which are pertinent to the subject. When one talks about Malay manuscripts, one would be referring to handwritten documents which are mostly written in the Malay language and are mainly in the Jawi script dating as early as the 15th century. The manuscripts cover numerous areas and include studies on the Malay language, Islamic studies, astrology, folk literature, traditional medicine, handwritten Quran and its interpretations, history and historiography, laws and discourses on the Malay society and culture. They provide glimpses into the past and it is a rare national heritage that must be preserved for future generations.

Within Malaysia itself, there are a number of repositories of Malay manuscripts, which include Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia, Arkib Negara Malaysia, Pusat Islam Malaysia, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka and the older university libraries such as the University of Malaya and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. Collectively, these repositories hold over 1,000 manuscripts. In 1983, Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia was declared the national centre for Malay manuscripts through the National Library Act 1972. Section 4(2)(d)(iii) of the Act provides for the establishment of “the National Centre for Malay Manuscripts for the acquisition, documentation and use of Malay manuscripts”. However, various other libraries outside of Malaysia has established their own Malay manuscripts repository such as libraries in Leiden, University College London, Cambridge University, Bodleian Library in Oxford, the British Museums, Australian National University library, New York Public Library and various European , Indonesia and Bruneian libraries.

### **Problems with the current system**

- a) Malay manuscript collections are scattered in repositories throughout the world and researchers as well as scholars have limited access to these repositories. A digital library would help solve access problems as well as stimulate scholarly collaborations in the study and research of Malay manuscripts.
- b) There is a need to describe or catalogue the Malay manuscripts in greater detail to facilitate searching and retrieval. Special metadata schema and cataloguing practices need to be developed to ensure uniform descriptions.
- c) Great care has to be taken when handling the manuscripts since they are often very fragile and brittle. Although the various libraries take great pains in ensuring that these items are well-preserved, preservation and conservation measures are expensive and digitisation is seen as a better preservation option would be a viable preservation alternative..
- d) Collaboration between researchers and scholars are extremely difficult especially when it involves groups of individuals transliterating and annotating works and a digital library with an annotating and transliterating tool would help stimulate such social and educational networking.
- e) Most of the manuscripts are written in the Jawi script of the Malay language and this is an endangered script which cannot be read by a high proportion of Malaysians. It is hoped that added modules such as “talking manuscript” (audio) or a transliterating module could be added to the digital library suite to encourage manuscript reading by those who cannot read Jawi or the handicapped.
- f) Each repository usually keep their manuscripts under lock and key because of its value and this in turn accentuates the access problem. A digital library with different access rights, where each item in the various collections are watermarked to ease identification of each collection can be instituted in a digital library environment.

### **Proposal**

At this stage, the objective is to instrument the preservation, access and building of knowledge bases of Malay manuscripts for use by both the Malay world and the European

Malay studies learning communities. A collaborative digital library network will enable the repositories within the country and those outside to participate in the building of a digital library of Malay manuscripts. The modules would help in the:

- (i) management processes in which the system can handle digitised manuscript storage, retrieval and display
- (ii) develop metadata schema and cataloguing practices to describe the manuscript as a single item as well individual pages effectively
- (iii) provide integrity of individual resources through water marking processes
- (iv) providing tools that help the research community collaborating processes such as an “annotator tool”, “transliterating tool”, and “manuscript studies” “collection space” comprising articles, research reports, theses, proceedings” collaboratively contributed by participating repositories
- (v) architecting mirror or replication of sites across the various repositories with the possibility of using grid networks for faster and efficient processes distribution and query handling.

The initiative used the manuscript collection held at the Dewan Bahasa and Pustaka Library as well as those held at the University of Malaya Library as the test bed. Both libraries have agreed to be collaborators, content providers and expert knowledge managers of Malay manuscripts.

### **MyManuskrip – Digital Library of Malay Manuscripts**

**<http://mymanuskrip.fsktm.um.edu.my>**

MyManuskrip was developed using the Greenstone Digital Library Software (<http://www.greenstone.org>). The software was developed by the New Zealand Digital Library Project at the University of Waikato in New Zealand. It is distributed with UNESCO and the Human Info NGO. Apart from being an open-source software, it is multilingual and numerous organisations worldwide have been using the software to develop their digital library collections. Amongst the collections hosted by the group are the New Orleans Disaster Oral History Project, Literature for Vietnam, Sahel Point Doc, Crystal, Muster and many others. The developers stated that “the aim of the Greenstone software is to empower users,

particularly in universities, libraries, and other public service institutions, to build their own digital libraries". Depending on the level of expertise they possess, users can easily construct their own digital library using a set of documents either in HTML, Word, PDF, or other format. One can also replicate an existing collection and populate it with new documents and Greenstone also offers various options which allow for personalisation.

MyManuskrip or the Digital Library of Malay Manuscripts (Fig. 1) has 6 collections with more than 50 manuscripts, The collections are the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka Manuscripts, University of Malaya Manuscripts, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Library, National Library of Malaysia, Published Malay Manuscripts and Other Manuscripts Related Resources. The manuscripts are scanned and uploaded to the DL and are placed in one of these categories – customs, language, folk prose, traditional medicine, historiography, folk poetry, religion, history



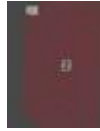
Fig. 1: MyManuskrip

The system allows users to browse and search for all the manuscripts in the DL. On choosing an object, one can either choose to view the image (Fig. 2) or view the metadata (Fig. 3).

**القصة اينله حكایت نام کج مارا يعتر لا الوامة اذله ۲۷**  
 کيک اثن لاکي مشهور و پرتا اذ ديانتس اغين لالو کيا و اغين کران چتران مپاکن اصل کجدين  
 کري دل اکبر دان اصل کجدين لاجن دان لاکي چتران مچکا کن هاتي بک سکل ما نسي سفاي  
 صفون مناره هار ف کندا الله سبحانه و تعالي نوهن يع مچد بکن سکلين عالم د مکينله کونن  
 اصل چتران د چتران اوله اور غنغ امفون چتران اين ادا سوغ راجاد نکري بر نام کفکابوان راجان  
 بر نام مهراج شمس عالم لخالو دغن منترعي فقکاو ي هلو بالغ فصلون تباد اتف مناي بايقن تر لا الو  
 بسر کچان بکندا بزه بر اف قول نکري بکچيل تعلق مغنتر اف تي کنکري ايزه ادا فون اصل کندا  
 ايزه در فدانو چو چو سلطان سکندر ذوالقورنين تنکا لاسمايم ديانتس تحت کرجان امفونله  
 منترعي مغادف دکان بکنند دان امفونله منترعي مغادف دکيري بکنند دوار اتس هلبالغ فصلون  
 ککاکه بواني دکان بکنند دان دوار اتس هلبالغ فصلون يع کلمان دکيري بکنند دان بر اتس حاکم دان  
 بعلم فنديت علماء مغادف بکنند بهراق فوله در فدان دان سيدا رعيت تباد اتف مناي  
 بايقن بکنند ملا کون عادل دان مور تباد اخالي در فدان تفاوس فر کسا مشهور له و پرتا اذ سکل  
 کري اسينغ بايقنله داغ سنترعي ماسق بر نيا ککنکري ايزه تر لا الو راي سفره هاري راي سه هاري  
 مکينله سه هاري عادل دان مور بکنند ميلفکار نکري تباد اله سوغ غفون مپيت نام تر انياي  
 شهر الکت ادا سوغ منترعي بر نام منترعي دالوس تونن تومون اصل منترعي ساغده دکاسه  
 بکنند کران اي تر لا الو عارف محققان لاکي ناهود علم حاکم دان علمو معلم سننتيا ساي منترعي  
 کندا بارغ عسوة فلن جاف يع سوکر ايا ليم مجار امو دهکن ادا فون بکنند ايزه تباد ابر قنط  
 ساغده حشره بکنند بر کندا فلن خترا بهراق بکنند بر قول دان ناخر سرت ميري در دم صغده  
 بر سکل فقير مسکلين تباد اجوک در فدان اوله انقي مک ادا سوغ ريد و نوله ملته منفقو انتر  
 مرفون دوار و رغ بايک روفان چنک مانس يعنوها بر نام سيني جليله دان يعنوها بر نام سيني  
 سليه کدان دان اميل بکنند فله اذغن سفر تين مک يعنوها ايزه داميل بکنند کن کنديو کالو ادا فون  
 نف مک سيني جليله ايزه دکويت کن اوله بکنند ان سوغ ريد و نوله بر نام جوهر سالم کران  
 يعنوها تونن تومون در فدان نف بکنند اجوک بايک بودي بهاسان دکاسه اوله بکنند تباد ا  
 غالي اي مغادف بر نيوت کيقنين کندا بکنند مک ادا کندا سوات هاري بکنند ممقل فر دان منترعي  
 دان منترعي فان صرافت دالوس بکنند بر نيوته دغن کمشغولن هي منترعيو ستا فال حال  
 هب تباد امندافه انو فقفل هب ساقله مرته نکري هب اين ساغده حسلت هب  
 دن فلن سوغ انو جافن فوتس نام هب ستا فلن اختيار منتر بکو کد و مک بر داغ سمه  
 در دان منترعي دان منترعي انت دالوس دولت تونکوشاه عالم بر نمبه ۲۵ دولت سرت دلجو  
 کين الله تعالي عمردويم شاه عالم ککل وداله کرجان سرت دکري نيا الله تعالي فترا کن  
 اي شاه عالم مک ادا فلک منفرجه ادا سوغ فقير فقفل اورغ کندي ماليم ديوان ساغده کونن  
 اهو علو يع غايب ۲ برس مات فر نته کس اذ قل لاکي ان داغ فون بوله دخبر کين فردي کير  
 ماتک بايک دي شاه عالم جويا بر تان فدان کالو ادا فقنوت مک بنو فون هاتي بکنند اسميه  
 منترعي کد و ايزه مک فر دان منترعي فون ميور سوغ ريد و نوله فردي ممقل ماليم ديوان مک  
 دن و نوله ايتفون فر کيله فد ماليم ديوان مپيکن سيدا فر دان منترعي فر ميلان ۲۰ ماليم ملادف  
 اي بکنند حاضر و فقفل فن مک ماليم ديوان فون تونن در غفون بر جانن دابر کنن

Fig. 2: Example of an image – Hikayat Ganja Mara

Thumbnail:



Title: Hikayat Ganja Mara  
AltTitle: Ganja Mara  
ShelfMark: Mss 149, Microfiche 16657  
Creator: [Dato' Saudagar Puteh?]  
Category: Hikayat [Folk Prose]  
Repository: University of Malaya Library, Kuala Lumpur  
OrigDate: 1880.  
OrigPlace: Not known.  
Dimensions: 31 cm. x 20 cm. [31sm x 20sm].  
Foliation: 203 leaves. [203 hlm].  
Layout: Single column. On average, 34 lines on page and 12 words per line.  
Satu kolum. Purata 34 baris setiap kolum dan 12 perkataan setiap baris.  
TextLang: Malay, Jawi.  
Material: Yellowish paper. Kertas kekuningan.  
Condition: The condition is satisfactory. Some pages are so discoloured that it becomes difficult to read. Hard cover. [Manuskrip dalam memuaskan. Beberapa mukasurat sangat kotor sehingga agak susah hendak dibaca. Kulit tebal]  
Support: Written in black ink but a number of words were written with red ink. The writing is small and close. Readable. [Ditulis dengan dakwat hitam tetapi ada beberapa perkataan ditulis dengan dakwat merah. Tulisan kecil dan rapat. Boleh dibaca.]  
Surrogate: PDF , 24.63KB, 208 images, Also in Microfiche. Kuala Lumpur : University of Malaya Library, 2005.  
MsContent (Subject): Folk literature, Malay – Islamic influences; Malay literature.  
Watermark: None. Tiada  
Source: Web Public Access Catalogue, UML.  
Siti Hawa Haji Salleh. Hans Overbeck and the mistaken identity of the author of Hikayat Ganja Mara. 10th European Colloquium on Indonesian and Malay Studies, 17-22 June 1996, Berlin, 17p. UM. PPZ. Koleksi Persidangan. PL5065 ECIMS 10.  
Siti Hawa Haji Salleh. Unsur-unsur perbandingan dan perulangan dalam kesusasteraan Melayu tradisional: kes Hikayat Ganja Mara dan Syair Indera sebaha. Seminar Kesusasteraan Bandingan, 14-16 November 1995, Kuala Lumpur. Vol.1, p.322-333. PL5098 SKB.  
Additional: Hikayat Ganja Mara. Sikarang oleh Dato' Saudagar Puteh. Penang: Freeman, 1897. 281p; 33 cm. Text in Jawi. PL5110.3HGM.Put. UM. PPZ.  
Hikayat Ganja Mara. Diusahakan oleh Hood bin Musa. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1963. Xi, 153p.; 20 cm. PL5110.3 HGM. UM.PPZ.

Fig. 3: Example of metadata – *Hikayat Ganja Mara*

### **University of Malaya Library's Role**

The University of Malaya Library has been collecting manuscripts since its establishment in the 1950s. It has a total of 326 original manuscripts in its collection. Manuscripts are normally purchased on recommendation from a seller and after acquiring them, a photostat copy as well as a microfilm copy are made. They are then catalogued and the photostat and microfilm copies are on-loan to the users. The original manuscripts are kept in a controlled environment and are only accessible to the staff. However, users do need to look at the original manuscripts since the copies they have accessed to are not comparable to the original in terms of colour and material.

The Library has always stressed on the need to make different forms of information be accessible to the users. However, the Librarian has a difficult choice to make since it would normally be unfavourable to the users. Manuscripts are brittle and minimum handling is favoured over mass access. The Library therefore felt that by scanning and uploading the manuscripts page-by-page onto the digital library website, one not only preserve the manuscript but also make it accessible to the users in a form which is identical to the original.

The Library has uploaded a total of 15 manuscripts comprising of religion (1 copy), folk prose (10), folk poetry (1) and history (3). The staff are now actively engaged in the scanning and uploading process. The nature of the manuscripts themselves make the process rather time-consuming since each and every item has to be handled with the utmost care. Apart from that, the Library also scans and uploads other resources which are related to the manuscripts. This might take the form of journal articles, final year undergraduate project reports, theses or dissertations which are produced by the academics as well as the students from Universiti Malaya or from other universities.

### **Conclusion**

The Universiti of Malaya Library will continue to be an active member of the digital library project. It is hoped that this collaboration might lead to :

- i. New improved service in archiving, preserving, processing, describing, accessing, retrieving and studying Malay manuscripts
- ii. Higher collaboration between repositories of Malay manuscripts within the country and other repositories abroad holding similar collections
- iii. Increased collaboration between persons involved in the study and teaching of Malay manuscripts
- iv. Maintained integrity and security of collections through different levels of access rights and policies, water marking of resources and mirroring collections.
- v. Allowing the educational community access to e-manuscript for study and utilizing it for teaching and learning
- vi. Increased access to and use of a collection which is otherwise unknown and underused
- vii. Increase awareness of the public about our heritage in the form of Malay manuscripts

In line with Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia's position as the National Centre for Malay Manuscripts, it is proposed that the prototype will be hosted at Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia with national and international partnering repositories collaboratively using the system to store and provide access to digitised manuscript collections. Foreign repositories worldwide are thus invited to use MyManuskrip to store and provide access to their own Malay manuscript collections.

### **Bibliography**

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