

MALAY MANUSCRIPTS AS CULTURAL MEMORY: ISLAMIC KNOWLEDGE TRANSMISSION IN THE MALAY-INDONESIAN WORLD

Muhammad Azmi*¹, Reza Ronaldo², Arif Muzayin Shofwan³, Khalid Rahman⁴
^{1*} Prodi Pendidikan Sejarah FKIP, Universitas Mulawarman Samarinda, Indonesia
² Sekolah Tinggi Ekonomi dan Bisnis Islam Lampung, Indonesia
³ Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Blitar, Indonesia
⁴ Universitas Brawijaya Malang, Indonesia
e-mail: 1azmi@fkip.unmul.ac.id, 2rezaronaldo1967@gmail.com,
3arifsofwan2@gmail.com, 4tlq@ub.ac.id

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.69552/mumtaz.v6i2.3967>

Received:
July 16, 2026

Revised:
September 07, 2026

Accepted:
September 14, 2026

Published:
September, 2026

*Corresponding author

Abstract

This article examines Malay manuscripts as media of cultural memory in the transmission of Islamic knowledge in the Malay-Indonesian world. Rather than treating manuscripts only as philological sources, material objects, or historical documents, it asks how material form, textual patterning, and social use jointly stabilize knowledge across generations. The study employs a qualitative manuscript-based design integrating codicological description, philological and textual-critical reading, thematic coding, and Jan Assmann's cultural memory theory. Three analytically contrasting texts are purposively selected: *Syair Dang Sarat*, *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, and *Hikayat Bayan Budiman*. The analysis identifies three genre-specific memory regimes: ritual-poetic memory in *Syair Dang Sarat*, exemplary-political memory in *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, and dialogic-didactic memory in *Hikayat Bayan Budiman*. Comparison shows that Islamic manuscript epistemology is produced not by textual content alone but through the interaction of Jawi script, material support, recurrent formula, narrative structure, recitation, and circulation. Malay manuscripts therefore function as epistemic infrastructures that localize Islamicate knowledge while shaping moral pedagogy, authority, and communal identity. The study further argues that preservation should retain provenance, material and textual metadata, and evidence of use rather than treating digitization as image capture alone.

Keywords: *Cultural Memory; Islamic Knowledge Transmission; Malay Manuscripts; Codicology; Textual Criticism.*



Copyright © 2026 The Author(s).

This article is distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) (CC BY-SA 4.0).

Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji naskah-naskah Melayu sebagai media memori budaya dalam transmisi pengetahuan Islam di dunia Melayu-Indonesia. Alih-alih memandang naskah hanya sebagai sumber filologis, objek material, atau dokumen sejarah, penelitian ini menelaah bagaimana bentuk material, pola tekstual, dan praktik penggunaan sosial secara bersama-sama menstabilkan pengetahuan lintas generasi. Penelitian menggunakan desain kualitatif berbasis naskah yang mengintegrasikan deskripsi kodikologis, pembacaan filologis dan kritik teks, pengodean tematik, serta teori memori budaya Jan Assmann. Tiga teks yang kontras secara analitis dipilih secara purposif: Syair Dang Sarat, Hikayat Hang Tuah, dan Hikayat Bayan Budiman. Hasil analisis menunjukkan tiga rezim memori berbasis genre: memori ritual-puitik dalam Syair Dang Sarat, memori teladan-politik dalam Hikayat Hang Tuah, dan memori dialogis-didaktik dalam Hikayat Bayan Budiman. Perbandingan menunjukkan bahwa epistemologi naskah Islam tidak dibentuk oleh isi teks semata, tetapi oleh interaksi aksara Jawi, dukungan material, formula berulang, struktur naratif, resitasi, dan sirkulasi. Karena itu, naskah Melayu berfungsi sebagai infrastruktur epistemik yang melokalkan pengetahuan Islam lintas-wilayah sekaligus membentuk pedagogi moral, otoritas, dan identitas komunal. Studi ini juga menegaskan bahwa pelestarian perlu mempertahankan provenans, metadata material dan tekstual, serta jejak penggunaan, bukan sekadar melakukan alih media digital.

Kata Kunci: Memori Budaya; Transmisi Pengetahuan Islam; Naskah Melayu; Kodikologi; Kritik Teks.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic manuscript studies increasingly treat manuscripts not as passive containers of text but as material and social objects shaped by copying, reading, teaching, collecting, and circulation (Akkerman, 2024; Evans, 2024). Here, codicology examines material and social features such as script, support, provenance, copying context, and circulation, while philology focuses on textual form, wording, variation, and transmission. Together, these approaches connect the physical manuscript with the knowledge practices it enables.

In the Malay-Indonesian world, Islamic knowledge circulated through Arabic scholastic works and formal institutions, but also through Malay genres such as syair and hikayat. Jawi literacy, adaptations of Arabic and Persian materials, and recitation practices localized religious, ethical, and political ideas in Malay linguistic and narrative forms (Bania & Akob, 2025; Sajidin & Nufus, 2024; Ulfa, 2024). Recent studies therefore describe Southeast Asian manuscript traditions as active sites of

Islamization and knowledge production rather than peripheral repositories (Kuswandi et al., 2024; Mursyid et al., 2026).

This perspective matters because Malay manuscripts are dispersed across courtly, religious, colonial, national, library, and private collections. Their meanings depend not only on textual content but also on provenance, scribal history, script, genre, and communities of copying, performance, preservation, and reinterpretation (Rachman et al., 2022; Yahya & Jones, 2021). Written and oral transmission also overlap, making repetition, recitation, and social use part of a manuscript's mnemonic force (Affan et al., 2025; Hady et al., 2025).

Despite these advances, the literature remains fragmented. Philological editions establish texts and witnesses, codicological studies describe material features, and literary studies interpret narrative or religious meaning. Less attention has been given to how material support, recurrent formula, textual variation, genre, and performance jointly stabilize Islamic knowledge as cultural memory. The research gap therefore concerns the mechanism through which manuscript form makes knowledge authoritative, memorable, and transmissible, not merely the meanings contained in a text.

Jan Assmann's (2011) cultural memory theory provides the analytical lens because collective memory is sustained through external symbolic supports, including writing, and through repeatable forms that preserve meaning beyond face-to-face communication. Applied to Malay manuscripts, the key questions become what is remembered, through which material and textual forms, how repetition or circulation supports remembrance, and what forms of authority or identity are reproduced.

Accordingly, this article asks: how do selected Malay manuscripts function as mnemonic systems in shaping and transmitting Islamic knowledge in the Malay-Indonesian world? It examines *Syair Dang Sarat*, *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, and *Hikayat Bayan Budiman* as contrasting cases of poetic-moral, historical-political, and framed-didactic transmission. Rather than producing complete critical editions, the study traces an evidence chain from codicological context to selected textual units, thematic coding, cultural-memory interpretation, and cross-case comparison.

The study contributes theoretically by advancing Islamic manuscript epistemology: manuscript knowledge becomes authoritative and transmissible through the interaction of script, material support, formula, genre, narrative structure, and circulation. Methodologically, it integrates codicological, philological, textual-critical, thematic, and comparative analysis in a transparent sequence. Practically, it argues that preservation should retain provenance, material description, textual variants, and evidence of use alongside digital images, because

digitization without context can flatten the social and material histories that give manuscripts meaning (Evans, 2024; Pereda et al., 2025). These contributions reposition Malay manuscripts as epistemic infrastructures through which Islamicate ideas are localized, rehearsed, negotiated, and transmitted across generations.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative manuscript-based design that integrates four analytical lenses in a single evidence chain rather than applying them as parallel descriptions. Codicology establishes the material and collection context; philology and textual criticism identify and compare meaningful textual units; thematic analysis groups those units by recurring ethical, political, and didactic functions; and Assmann's cultural memory theory interprets how those material-textual patterns stabilize knowledge beyond individual acts of reading (Assmann, 2011; Braun & Clarke, 2021, 2022, 2023).

The corpus was selected purposively using five criteria: (1) membership in the Malay manuscript tradition; (2) Jawi or an Arabic-derived literacy environment; (3) identifiable ethical, political, didactic, or religious content related to Islamic knowledge transmission; (4) availability through recognized collections, critical editions, or verifiable digital repositories; and (5) genre contrast sufficient for comparative analysis. On this basis, the study selected *Syair Dang Sarat*, *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, and *Hikayat Bayan Budiman*.

Representativeness is analytical rather than statistical. The three texts were chosen to maximize contrast among a poetic *syair*, a historical-political *hikayat*, and a framed didactic *hikayat*, enabling comparison of mnemonic mechanisms across genre, authority, and pedagogical function. The corpus therefore represents three important modes of Malay textual transmission, not the full geographical, chronological, or generic diversity of Malay manuscript culture.

Table 1. Corpus and analytical focus

Text	Collection / Edition	Script	Period	Genre	Analytical focus
<i>Syair Dang Sarat</i>	British Library, Add MS 12381; NLB digital description	Jawi	18th-19th century	Malay <i>syair</i>	Moral pedagogy, adab, mnemonic rhyme

Text	Collection / Edition	Script	Period	Genre	Analytical focus
<i>Hikayat Hang Tuah</i>	British Library, Add MS 12384; Malay textual editions	Jawi	Early 19th century	Historical <i>hikayat</i>	Political ethics, loyalty, historical memory
<i>Hikayat Bayan Budiman</i>	Perpustakaan Nasional RI; critical edition Br. 115	Jawi	18th-19th century	Didactic <i>hikayat</i>	Framed narrative, prudence, localization

Access also shaped the corpus. The analysis depends on manuscript witnesses, repository descriptions, and editions that are currently available for scholarly verification; unequal digitization, survival, cataloguing, and institutional access may privilege well-preserved or well-catalogued collections. Material claims were therefore limited to features documented by the consulted witnesses or catalogues, and the study does not treat absence from the accessible corpus as evidence of absence from the wider tradition (Evans, 2024; Mursyid et al., 2026).

Step 1, codicological profiling: for each text, the study recorded the collection or edition, script, approximate period, genre, and documented provenance or transmission. These variables were used analytically to identify how material support and collection history condition possible practices of copying, reading, recitation, and preservation (Akkerman, 2024; Fauji et al., 2025).

Step 2, philological and textual-critical extraction: the study identified opening formulas, recurrent moral statements, speeches of exemplary figures, and narrative scenes that carry explicit ethical, political, or didactic meaning. Each unit was recorded with its normalized transliteration, immediate narrative context, recurrence or formulaic status, and, where available, variant or edition information. English renderings were used only to clarify meaning; the study did not attempt a full stemma.

Step 3, thematic coding: the selected units were coded under three broad categories - moral pedagogy, political memory, and transregional didactic exchange. Coding was iterative; a passage could inform more than one category, but its dominant function was assigned from its immediate textual context. These codes served as the bridge between close reading and cross-manuscript comparison (Braun & Clarke, 2021, 2022, 2023).

Step 4, cultural-memory interpretation: each coded unit was examined through four questions derived from Assmann's framework: what knowledge or value is stabilized; what material or textual form makes it repeatable; what authority or identity is reproduced, negotiated, or localized; and what practice of reading, recitation, copying, or circulation sustains it? This operationalization prevents cultural memory from functioning as an abstract label detached from close textual evidence (Assmann, 2011).

Step 5, cross-case synthesis: the three manuscripts were compared along five dimensions - memory regime, mnemonic mechanism, mode of authority, temporal or social effect, and epistemic implication. A theoretical claim was retained only when it could be traced to both specific textual evidence and documented material or collection context. This cross-case matrix makes the integration of codicology, philology, textual criticism, and cultural memory systematic and reproducible at the level of analytical reasoning.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results proceed from close reading of each manuscript to cross-case comparison. This sequence keeps theoretical interpretation anchored in specific material and textual evidence before identifying differences in how each genre produces cultural memory.

Moral Pedagogy and Mnemonic Transmission in Syair Dang Sarat

Syair Dang Sarat demonstrates how poetic form supports the transmission of ethical and religious knowledge. Codicologically, the text belongs to a Malay manuscript environment shaped by Jawi literacy, courtly narrative, and the circulation of syair as a performative genre. The opening formula already places the poem within an Islamic horizon of remembrance. The NLB description records the opening words in Jawi, which may be normalized as:

"Alhamdulillah puji yang tentu/bagi Allah tiada sekutu."

This opening does more than introduce the text. It establishes a devotional frame that connects poetic narration with the act of praising God.

The mnemonic strength of syair lies in its repeated rhythm and balanced four-line structure. In manuscript societies where texts were often heard as much as read, regular rhyme made ethical instruction easier to remember. The form itself therefore participates in transmission. It is not a neutral container of meaning; it disciplines the movement of memory by turning moral instruction into repeatable sound patterns.

In this sense, Syair Dang Sarat belongs to a larger Malay poetic tradition in which didactic narration depends on sequential rhyme and cumulative recall. Recent studies of Malay poetic and oral traditions describe syair as a form that can sustain long narrative movement while maintaining a tight mnemonic pattern. This helps explain why moral counsel in the text appears not as scattered advice, but as patterned instruction that can be retained through recitation (Affan et al., 2025; Firmansyah et al., 2021; Sakila et al., 2025; Salsabila et al., 2025).

The ethical vocabulary of Syair Dang Sarat also indicates how Islamic moral categories were embedded in Malay literary expression. A didactic line in the manuscript tradition may be rendered:

"Barang siapa menjaga adabnya, nescaya terpelihara agamanya."

The relation between adab and agama is central. Proper conduct is not presented as external politeness, but as a visible form of religious integrity. The manuscript thus links personal behavior, social order, and spiritual accountability.

Another textual unit develops the same moral logic through self-knowledge:

"Jika engkau hendak mengenal diri, kenalilah Tuhan dengan hati yang suci."

Here, the movement from self-recognition to knowledge of God reflects a pedagogical pattern common in Islamic ethical literature. The line works mnemonically because it compresses a complex spiritual teaching into a concise verbal form that can be recited and recalled.

A third unit emphasizes the social dimension of virtue. The poem repeatedly places moral conduct within relations among rulers, households, and communities. In this setting, ethical knowledge is not private contemplation only; it regulates how persons act within social bonds. Through poetic repetition, the manuscript teaches that religious memory must become social practice.

A fourth unit is the closing movement of the text, which the NLB description associates with royal and courtly imagery. The transition from praise and counsel to social status and proper conduct suggests that Syair Dang Sarat binds Islamic moral language to the courtly world of Malay society. The poem remembers Islam not as an abstract doctrine alone, but as a pattern of conduct performed in social life.

Table 2. Expanded sample units from Syair Dang Sarat

Sample unit	Textual feature	Mnemonic function	Interpretation
Opening praise to God	Devotional formula and Jawi literacy	Frames reading as remembrance	Islamic knowledge begins with ritualized praise.
Adab agama preserves	Ethical vocabulary	Links conduct to faith	Moral discipline becomes the core of transmission.
Self-knowledge and pure heart	Condensed spiritual counsel	Easy to recite and remember	The self is interpreted through divine knowledge.
Courtly/social conduct	Ethics placed in social relations	Transfers values into communal practice	Manuscript memory regulates social behavior.

Political Ethics and Historical Memory in Hikayat Hang Tuah

Hikayat Hang Tuah represents a different mode of cultural memory. Whereas Syair Dang Sarat works through poetic condensation, Hikayat Hang Tuah works through extended narrative and exemplary character. Codicologically, the text was widely copied and circulated in the Malay world. Its survival in multiple manuscript and printed forms indicates that it functioned as a shared narrative archive for remembering ideals of kingship, loyalty, courage, and Malay identity. Recent philological work on the text likewise emphasizes the density of Islamic vocabulary and religiosity within its Malay literary setting (Risdiawati & Nugroho, 2022).

The most famous formula associated with the narrative is

“Takkan Melayu hilang di dunia.”

Whether read as a direct textual phrase or as a later crystallization of Hang Tuah's cultural meaning, it shows how a narrative can become a mnemonic symbol. A short utterance comes to stand for the endurance of a community. This is precisely the work of cultural memory: the past is not preserved as a neutral record, but condensed into memorable figures, sayings, and scenes.

A second sample unit is the formula of obedience:

“Daulat tuanku, patik ini hamba yang hina.”

Such speech is not merely courtly politeness. It encodes a political theology of hierarchy in which authority is recognized through ritualized language. The repeated formula *daulat tuanku* turns royal authority into a performative memory.

Every time the phrase is copied or recited, the manuscript reactivates a model of political order.

A third unit appears in expressions such as
“mana titah, patik junjung.”

This formula connects loyalty with bodily submission: commands are not simply heard, but borne, upheld, and enacted. In philological terms, the phrase is short and formulaic; in cultural memory terms, it stabilizes a political ethic by making loyalty a memorable verbal gesture.

A fourth unit is found in the narrative contrast between *Hang Tuah* and other figures who test the boundaries of loyalty, justice, and personal honor. The manuscript does not present political ethics as a simple doctrine. It dramatizes tension: loyalty may preserve order, but it may also conflict with friendship, justice, and emotional truth. This narrative tension is what gives the text its mnemonic force. Readers remember not only the rule of loyalty, but the moral difficulty of living under authority.

Through these samples, *Hikayat Hang Tuah* can be read as a manuscript of political memory. It transmits Islamic and Malay ideals of order, service, leadership, and communal endurance through narrative performance. Assmann's (2011) theory is useful here because the text functions as a cultural figure of memory: Hang Tuah is not only a character but an emblem through which later communities negotiate what loyalty and Malay identity mean.

The political memory of *Hikayat Hang Tuah* also needs to be located within Malay concepts of sovereignty and courtly communication. The recurring language of service, daulat, and command reflects a political world in which hierarchy is made visible through ritualized address and embodied obedience. For that reason, the manuscript does not merely tell a heroic story; it trains readers and listeners to recognize the verbal grammar of authority.

Table 3. Expanded sample units from *Hikayat Hang Tuah*

Sample unit	Textual feature	Mnemonic function	Interpretation
“Takkan Melayu hilang di dunia”	Condensed identity formula	Turns narrative into communal symbol	Malay endurance is remembered through heroic speech.
“Daulat tuanku”	Courtly-political formula	Ritualizes authority	Royal power is preserved in repeated language.

Sample unit	Textual feature	Mnemonic function	Interpretation
"Patik junjung titah"	Formula obedience	of Stabilizes loyalty as ethical memory	Service to authority becomes a remembered virtue.
Conflict between loyalty and justice	Narrative tension	Makes ethics memorable through dilemma	Political memory is negotiated, not merely repeated.

Transregional Didactic Exchange in Hikayat Bayan Budiman

Hikayat Bayan Budiman illustrates the transregional dimension of Malay manuscript culture. The text belongs to a wider Islamicate narrative world connected to Persian and Indo-Persian framed storytelling, but the Malay version does not function as a mechanical translation. It localizes a transregional narrative model into Malay ethical language, Jawi literacy, and didactic storytelling.

The codicological and philological significance of the text lies in its framed structure. The parrot, or bayan, delays, advises, and instructs through stories. This structure creates a repeated pedagogical rhythm: desire is interrupted by narration, narration produces reflection, and reflection postpones morally dangerous action. The manuscript therefore turns storytelling into an ethical technique.

A first sample unit appears in the repeated narrative formula:

"Maka kata Bayan."

The formula is simple, but its repetition is important. It marks the moment when moral speech enters the narrative. Each occurrence signals that the reader or listener is being moved from action to reflection. In cultural memory terms, the formula organizes a recurring scene of instruction.

A second unit appears when the bayan tells the woman to delay or reconsider her action. In a critical edition of Br. 115, the bayan's speech often functions by postponing immediate desire through the promise of another story. This delay is the ethical mechanism of the text. The manuscript teaches prudence not by direct prohibition alone, but by narrating alternatives until moral restraint becomes possible. The critical edition of Br. 115 provides the textual basis for this close reading (Oktavia, 2020).

A third unit concerns the motif of untrustworthy friendship, represented in the episode of the young bird and the cerpelai. The warning against unreliable companionship teaches discernment, a virtue central to Islamic and Malay moral pedagogy. The story is not only about animals; it is a memory device for evaluating social relations.

A fourth unit concerns repentance and restoration. In one manuscript page preserved online, the bayan advises a distressed woman not to grieve and to wait patiently. The scene shows that didactic storytelling also preserves hope, forgiveness, and the possibility of moral repair. Thus, the manuscript transmits Islamic ethical values through narrative patience rather than abstract doctrine.

Hikayat Bayan Budiman therefore demonstrates how Malay manuscripts localized transregional Islamic narrative forms. Its memory function lies in the movement from imported story cycle to local ethical pedagogy. The text remembers the wider Islamic world, but it does so in Malay narrative idiom. This makes the manuscript a site where global and local knowledge are joined.

The case of *Hikayat Bayan Budiman* further confirms that Malay Islamic manuscript culture worked through adaptation rather than passive borrowing. Narrative cycles associated with wider Persianate and Islamicate romance traditions were re-encoded in Malay, Jawi, and local didactic vocabulary. This process made transregional stories usable for moral reflection in local settings and shows why philological attention to translation, variant, and textual witness remains necessary.

Table 4. Expanded sample units from *Hikayat Bayan Budiman*

Sample unit	Textual feature		Mnemonic function		Interpretation
"Maka kata Bayan"	Recurrent formula	speech	Signals instruction	moral	The parrot becomes a voice of ethical memory.
Postponement before action	Framed delay	narrative	Transforms into reflection	desire	Storytelling becomes moral discipline.
Warning against unreliable friendship	Animal exemplum		Encodes discernment	social	Ethics is remembered through memorable narrative analogy.
Patience and restoration	Counsel in crisis		Preserves hope and repentance		Moral failure can be redirected through advice.

Comparative Synthesis: Manuscripts as Cultural Memory

Cross-case comparison reveals not one undifferentiated "cultural memory" but three distinct memory regimes. Syair Dang Sarat produces ritual-poetic memory: patterned rhyme and devotional-moral formulae make adab repeatable and therefore easier to internalize (Singapore, 2013). Hikayat Hang Tuah produces

exemplary-political memory: authority is remembered through heroic characterization and courtly formulas, yet narrative conflicts between loyalty, justice, friendship, and honor keep that authority open to moral negotiation (Risdiawati & Nugroho, 2022). Hikayat Bayan Budiman produces dialogic-didactic memory: repeated counsel and narrative postponement interrupt immediate desire and train reflection through exempla (Oktavia, 2020). The contrast shows that genre determines not only how knowledge is expressed but how it becomes memorable.

The regimes also differ in the mode of authority they construct. In *Syair Dang Sarat*, authority is devotional and normative; repeated praise and ethical maxims present conduct as inseparable from religious integrity. In *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, authority is hierarchical and political, signaled by *daulat* and formulas of service, but its legitimacy is tested by narrative dilemmas. In *Hikayat Bayan Budiman*, authority is advisory rather than sovereign: the *bayan* persuades through stories, delay, and analogy. Cultural memory therefore does not merely preserve norms; it can ritualize them, dramatize their tensions, or make them persuasive through deliberation.

Table 5. Comparative cultural-memory regimes across the corpus

Manuscript	Memory regime and mnemonic mechanism	Authority and social effect	Epistemic implication
<i>Syair Dang Sarat</i>	Ritual-poetic: rhyme, four-line sequence, devotional and adab formulae	Devotional-normative; repeatability internalizes conduct and links faith to social order	Knowledge gains authority through memorable form and performative repetition
<i>Hikayat Hang Tuah</i>	Exemplary-political: heroic characterization, courtly formulae, ethical dilemmas	Hierarchical but contested; sovereignty is stabilized while loyalty-justice tension remains open to interpretation	Political knowledge is reproduced through exemplary narrative and negotiated memory
<i>Hikayat Bayan Budiman</i>	Dialogic-didactic: framed stories, postponement, exempla, recurrent bayan speech	Advisory; immediate desire is converted into reflection and moral self-restraint	Knowledge becomes persuasive through narrative mediation and localization

Assmann's (2011) framework helps explain why these differences matter. Cultural memory depends on external symbolic supports and stabilized forms that can survive individual memory. In the three manuscripts, Jawi script, recurrent

formulas, rhythmic structure, exemplary characters, and framed narration are such supports. Their mnemonic effect is strengthened by practices of copying, recitation, listening, and recirculation, which reconnect written form with social performance (Affan et al., 2025; Hady et al., 2025). The manuscript is therefore not simply the storage location of memory; its material and formal organization participates in producing what can be remembered.

This comparison advances an Islamic manuscript epistemology in which knowledge is understood as materially and socially mediated. What becomes authoritative is not content alone, but content organized through a script, genre, formula, narrative sequence, and circulation history. Codicology identifies the conditions under which a witness exists and moves; philology identifies the textual forms through which claims and values are articulated; cultural memory theory explains how those forms acquire durability and collective significance. The three approaches thus form a causal-interpretive chain rather than separate descriptive layers.

The comparative evidence also complicates a center-periphery model of Islamic knowledge transmission. The Malay-Indonesian world did not simply receive fixed knowledge from Arabic or Persian centers. It selected, translated, reorganized, narrated, and moralized Islamicate materials through local genres and social practices. This is most visible in Hikayat Bayan Budiman's localization of transregional story cycles, but it also appears in the Jawi mediation and locally intelligible forms of ethical and political instruction across the corpus (Awass, 2025; Iswanto et al., 2024). Localization, in this sense, is an epistemic operation: it changes the form through which knowledge becomes credible, memorable, and usable.

Finally, material preservation and cultural memory are not equivalent. Digitization can widen access and enable comparison, but a digital image detached from provenance, codicological description, variant relations, and use history can flatten the very context through which a manuscript acquired authority (Evans, 2024; Pereda et al., 2025). For Malay manuscript studies, preservation should therefore treat scans, metadata, textual relations, and social histories as an integrated evidentiary system rather than as separate outputs.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Malay manuscripts function as cultural memory through genre-specific interactions among material form, textual patterning, and social use. Syair Dang Sarat stabilizes adab through ritual-poetic repetition; Hikayat Hang Tuah turns loyalty and authority into exemplary-political memory that remains open to ethical negotiation; and Hikayat Bayan Budiman uses dialogic-

didactic storytelling to convert desire into reflection. These differences show that manuscript memory is produced through distinct formal mechanisms rather than by textual content alone.

The principal theoretical contribution is to Islamic manuscript epistemology. The analysis shows that authority and transmissibility arise from the combined work of script, material support, formula, narrative structure, performance, and circulation. Methodologically, the study demonstrates a traceable sequence from codicological context to textual unit, thematic code, cultural-memory function, and cross-case inference, thereby integrating codicology, philology, textual criticism, and Assmann's theory within one analytical procedure.

The study has several limitations. It analyzes only three strategically selected texts and therefore does not represent the full geographical, chronological, or generic range of Malay manuscript culture. Access was restricted to witnesses, repository descriptions, and editions available for verification, creating potential collection and digitization bias. The study also does not undertake full multi-witness stemmatic collation, direct material examination of every manuscript, or ethnographic observation of contemporary recitation communities. Its conclusions should therefore be read as analytically comparative rather than exhaustive. These limitations have practical implications for preservation. Digitization should retain provenance, codicological metadata, textual variants, and evidence of reading, copying, recitation, and collection history alongside high-resolution images. Such contextual preservation is especially important because digital infrastructures can broaden access while simultaneously reframe or detach objects from their earlier social settings.

Future research should move in two targeted directions. First, cross-collection studies should compare multiple witnesses held in institutions such as the British Library, National Library Board Singapore, Perpustakaan Nasional Republik Indonesia, and regional or private collections to trace variant, provenance, and circulation networks. Second, digital humanities approaches - including TEI-XML encoding, IIIF-based image comparison, human-validated handwritten-text recognition, and network or knowledge-graph analysis - can map scribes, owners, places, motifs, and transmission routes across larger corpora. Combining these tools with community-based research on recitation and manuscript use would connect digital evidence with the living social practices through which cultural memory is renewed.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to Universitas Mulawarman, Sekolah Tinggi Ekonomi dan Bisnis Islam, Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Blitar, and Universitas Brawijaya for their academic support during the preparation of this article. The authors also extend their appreciation to all individuals and institutions whose valuable assistance, comments, and encouragement contributed to the completion of this research and manuscript.

REFERENCES

- Affan, M., Riyanto, W. F., & Shuib, S. A. B. (2025). Aesthetic Reception and Interpretation of the Mamaca Oral Tradition in Pamekasan, Madura. *Journal of Language and Literature Studies*, 5(2), 272–289.
<https://doi.org/10.36312/jolls.v5i2.2687>
- Akkerman, O. (2024). *Social Codicology: The Multiple Lives of Manuscripts in Muslim Societies* (Vol. 21). Brill.
- Assmann, J. (2011). *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*. Cambridge University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511996306>
- Awass, O. (2025). Knowledge without Borders: Epistemic Communities, Dialogically Engaged Discursive Tradition, and the Transmission of Islamic Scholarship in the Eastern Indian Ocean World: Connections between Southeast and Western Asia. *Journal of Indian Ocean World Studies*, 9(1), 27–52.
- Bania, A. S., & Akob, B. (2025). Preserving the Jawi script in Aceh: Assessing literacy, cultural heritage, and modern paradigm challenges. *Studies in English Language and Education*, 12(1), 457–470.
<https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v12i1.36629>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis? *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 18(3), 328–352. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2020.1769238>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022). Conceptual and design thinking for thematic analysis. *Qualitative Psychology*, 9(1), 3–26.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/qup0000196>

- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2023). Toward good practice in thematic analysis: Avoiding common problems and be(com)ing a knowing researcher. *International Journal of Transgender Health*, 24(1), 1–6.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/26895269.2022.2129597>
- Evans, I. A. (2024). Bringing Up Underground Corpora: Ethics and Manuscripts in an Age of Digital Reproduction. *International Quarterly for Asian Studies*.
<https://doi.org/10.11588/iqas.2024.4.24578>
- Fauji, S., Jamaluddin, J., Mujahidah, A., & Adi, B. T. K. (2025). Codicological Study of Dawuhan Islamic Manuscripts as Insights into Nusantara Religious Literature. *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan*, 23(1), 109–141.
<https://doi.org/10.31291/jlka.v23i1.1261>
- Firmansyah, H., Fadilla, F., Kevin, Y., & Sari, N. (2021). Syair gulung: Perkembangan dan fungsinya sebagai pendidikan moral. *Ganaya: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Humaniora*, 4(2), 491–503. <https://doi.org/10.37329/ganaya.v4i2.1375>
- Hady, M. S., Roibin, Teguh Prastyo, A., Bakar, A., Faslah, R., Malik Fajar Alam, A., Barkah, Q., Himmatin, U., Nuyulis Naeni Puspitasari, I., & Abdul Ghani, M. Z. (2025). Cultural transformation: Religious moderation from manuscripts heritage to living tradition in Indonesia and Malaysia. *Cogent Education*, 12(1), 2556891. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2025.2556891>
- Iswanto, A., Maknun, M. L., Masfiah, U., & Wajdi, F. (2024). The linkage of Islamic intellectual traditions in Bali with Malay world: Kampung Saren Jawa Manuscripts. *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, 14(2), 203–229. <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v14i2.203-229>
- Kuswandi, D., Rohman, A., & Muttaqien, G. A. (2024). The Quran Manuscripts in Indonesia: A Historical Review. *Suhuf: International Journal of Islamic Studies*, 36(2). <https://doi.org/10.23917/suhuf.v36i2.6513>
- Mursyid, A. Y., Zin, A. A. M., & Hamid, F. A. F. A. (2026). Codicology, Islamization, and Qur'an Manuscripts in Southeast Asia: A Structural Mapping of Scholarship. *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis*, 27(1), 181–216.
<https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.v27i1.7013>
- Oktavia, W. (2020). Transkrip Edisi Kritis Hikayat Bayan Budiman (Br. 115). *Human Narratives*, 2(1), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.30998/hn.v2i1.580>

- Pereda, J., Willcox, P., Candela, G., Sanchez, A., & Murrieta-Flores, P. A. (2025). Online cultural heritage as a social machine: A socio-technical approach to digital infrastructure and ecosystems. *International Journal of Digital Humanities*, 7(1), 39–69. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42803-025-00097-6>
- Rachman, Y. B., Salim, T. A., Rachman, M. A., & Ratnasari, W. (2022). Dluwang Manuscripts from Royal Surakarta, Indonesia: Deterioration Phenomena and Care Practices. *Studies in Conservation*, 67(5), 289–301. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00393630.2021.1923284>
- Risdiawati, D., & Nugroho, F. H. (2022). Menyingkap Religiositas Hikayat Hang Tuah Melalui Penggunaan Kosakata Islamiah: Kajian Manuskrip Sastra Pendidikan pada Era Merdeka Belajar. *GHANCARAN: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Dan Sastra Indonesia*, 230–251.
- Sajidin, R. B., & Nufus, Z. (2024). Dari Tulisan Jawi ke Aksara Romawi: Benturan Ideologi dalam Perkembangan Serapan Bahasa Arab di Nusantara. *Cordova Journal*, 14(1), 96–116. <https://doi.org/10.20414/cordova.v14i1.9136>
- Sakila, S. R., Putro, K. Z., & Hibana, H. (2025). Awakening Early Conscience: Islamic Values and Religious Moderation in Syekh Abdurrahman Shiddiq's Syair. *Madania: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman*, 15(2), 153–168. <https://doi.org/10.24014/jiik.v15i2.37891>
- Salsabila, I. D., Soleha, S., Julianti, E., Maharani, C. A., & Maryamah. (2025). The Definition, Characteristics and Development of Malay Poetry. *Jurnal Pembelajaran Bahasa Dan Sastra*, 4(5), 1061–1070. <https://doi.org/10.55909/jpbs.v4i5.772>
- Singapore, N. L. B. (2013). *Syair Dang Sarat*. <https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/book-detail?cmsuud=1ea33d9d-cf7b-41c4-8c1b-fd621748b146>
- Ulfa, M. (2024). Aksara Arab Melayu di Kesultanan Melayu. *TASHWIR*, 12(1), 41–50. <https://doi.org/10.18592/jt.v12i01.13515>
- Yahya, F., & Jones, R. (2021). Malay manuscripts: A guide to paper and watermarks. The collected works of Russell Jones 1972–2015. *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 49(144), 139–394. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2021.1939521>