

Safeguarding manuscript-reading tradition as living heritage through ritual: mocoan tradition of an Osing family in Banyuwangi, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Manuscript-reading tradition in Indonesia has received little attention by scholars, while in fact this tradition is still practised by communities, in various rituals which may be called 'living manuscripts'. This study explains how the manuscript-reading tradition can be maintained and preserved as a living heritage. This study focuses on a manuscript-reading session related to a ritual – namely, the *mocoan lontar Hadis Dagang* – supported only by one Osing family in Banyuwangi, East Java, Indonesia. The study was conducted based on the manuscript, manuscript-reading tradition and the associated ritual, thus requiring an interdisciplinary approach of manuscript studies, tradition studies and community studies. The findings indicate that – a

tradition of manuscript reading maintained and preserved by a ritual – can be a living heritage and plays a role in safeguarding another intangible cultural heritage contained in these traditions. The ritual and manuscript-reading tradition, however, are under threat because the family members can no longer perform the manuscript-reading tradition, even though they support the tradition.

Keywords

living manuscript, manuscript-reading tradition, safeguarding, living heritage, *mocoan lontar Hadis Dagang*, Banyuwangi, Indonesia

Introduction

Oral transmission and performing traditions complement and enrich ancient manuscripts as written traditions (Ong 2002). Traditional Indonesians used to, and some still do, live in an environment where manuscripts are read on various occasions (Florida 1995, 11–12; Ricci 2011, 2). For example, Reid (2014, 270–271) cites the *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, which states that when the sultan of Melaka asked Hang Jebat to read the Saga, but what was actually being told was the performance of the stunning beauty of Hang Jebat's voice, not the content of the Saga that was read and hummed, which in the Javanese tradition is called the *macapatan* tradition. This shows that in Indonesian society in the past, at least before print culture grew and developed, the written tradition was related to other traditions, such as performances and rituals. However, there has not been much research on the manuscript-reading tradition, which has persisted in several areas of Indonesia that are said to be rich in various manuscript cultural heritages. Research has mostly been conducted on the study of texts and manuscript contexts, but researchers often pay little attention to the context of the living manuscripts lived by the people (Christomy and Ayu 2021, 225).

Manuscript research in Indonesia is still dominated by text studies, both in the form of studies that produce text editions as well as those that examine the manuscripts' contents and contexts. There are a few studies of manuscripts used in a live performances or rituals, such as the *Basimalin* (Suryadi 1998) and the *lontar Yusup* reading-session ritual in the Osing community of Banyuwangi (Arps 1990; Indarti 2018); the *mebasan*, the manuscript-reading session in Bali (Creese 2009); the *kayiak betereang* and *begadisan* rituals in Bengkulu (Sarwono 2020); the tradition of manuscript reading among the Madurese community, called the *mamaca* (Bouvier 2002; Dana and Hermien 2018; Hidayatullah 2020); the Sasak community reading session, called *mamacan* or *bekayat* (Saharudin 2012; Suyasa 2012); and the reading performance of *La Ga Ligo* in the *Massure'* tradition in Wajo, South Sulawesi (Hamsiati, Hamid and Mustolehudin 2021).

One form of the use of manuscripts or living manuscripts is manuscript-reading tradition. The tradition still exists today in various parts of Indonesia, such as in Bali, which is rich in manuscript-based traditions as part of people's religious rites. It can be found in Javanese palaces as well, both in Surakarta and Yogyakarta. However, there are also similar traditions carried out by ordinary people; the

majority, in fact all of them, are Muslims, and are embedded in the rituals carried out by the community. The tradition, carried out by the Indigenous people of Banyuwangi in East Java, the Osing people, is called *mocoan*.

Studies on *mocoan* have been carried out, both on the aspects of the tradition and ritual as well as on the manuscripts, especially the *mocoan lontar Yusup* (Arps 1990; 1992; Bouvier 2002; Hidayatullah 2018; 2020; Indarti 2018; Indarti and Hasibin 2018; Khoiriyah and Syarif 2019; Rifa'i 2021). An aspect that has not been seen in these studies is the role of manuscript-reading tradition as the guardian of the living heritage contained in these traditions. In addition, the existing studies on *mocoan*, as stated previously, focus more on the *mocoan lontar Yusup*, whereas there is another *mocoan* tradition that is only carried out by one family in Banyuwangi.

This study explains how a manuscript-reading tradition called the *mocoan lontar Hadis Dagang* was supported by one family of the Osing community and how they maintained and preserved the ritual so that it became a living heritage, as well as the challenges to the sustainability of this tradition. This study argues that the manuscript-reading tradition acts as a safeguard for living heritage and the values contained in the tradition, as well as securing the manuscripts and rituals. *Mocoan* is a mechanism to preserve cultural heritage that is passed down orally and in written form from parents to children. However, this mechanism faces several obstacles, the most urgent of which is the tradition's successors.

Living manuscript

The concept of living manuscript is an important basis for understanding manuscripts and their relationship to the traditions of the communities supporting the manuscripts, both as performing arts and rituals. Living manuscript is a phenomenon in which text and manuscript – two different concepts: the text shows the substance of the information, while the manuscript is the container for that content – are actualised in society through accompanying narrative strategy. This narrative strategy can be manifested in the act of copying the manuscript for the community's needs, as well as in the form of art and ritual. This concept can actually be seen ontologically in various traditions of manuscript reading in Indonesia, such as the *beluk* tradition, *wawacan* in Sunda, *mabasen* in Bali, *masura* in Bugis and *mocoan*, *mamaca* and *macapatan* in Java. With the construction of living manuscripts, texts

and manuscripts related to this performance, richer description and explanation of the text and context of the manuscript being studied are required. The context here is not only the past of the text but also the context within the current supporting community (Christomy and Ayu 2021, 233–235).

Intangible cultural heritage

An important concept of this research is ‘intangible cultural heritage’ (hereafter ICH). It is a practice, representation, expression, knowledge and skill that is recognised by communities, groups and individuals, or parties involved with their heritage (UNESCO 2020). ICH is passed down from one generation to the next, reinvented by communities or groups in response to their environment, and giving them a sense of identity and sustainability. ICH is a cultural work that is still alive today (living heritage), and it is recognised by the community or society as their cultural heritage. If the ICH is only mentioned and no longer lives in the community, no longer exists, is no longer practised and demonstrated, then it is only said to be cultural history. ICH can be seen with various characteristics – namely, in form, content and function. The characteristics can take the form of motion, speech, ceremony, knowledge, games and technology. The contents can be seen from the meaning, value and local wisdom. Meanwhile, ICH functions as identity strengthening, communication, teaching, rituals, medication, social control and entertainment. ICH functions as the ideological resistance of its community (Pudentia 2021).

UNESCO conceptualises ICH as something that is traditional as well as contemporary, inclusive and representative, and based in community. ICH represents not only traditional heritage from the past but also contemporary rural and urban practices in which cultural groups are diverse. It can be passed down from one generation to another, contributes to social cohesion, encourages a sense of identity and responsibility that helps individuals feel part of one or a different community and feel part of society in general. ICH develops on a community basis and depends on those whose knowledge of traditions, skills and customs are passed down throughout the community, from generation to generation, or to other communities. ICH can only become heritage when it is recognised by the community, group or individual who creates, maintains and transmits it, since without their acknowledgement, no one else can decide for them that certain expressions or practices are theirs (UNESCO 2022).

Safeguarding

Manuscripts as cultural assets and values contained in them need to be preserved over generations (UNESCO 2015, 2), in addition to being developed for various purposes in human life (UNESCO 2020). Therefore, preservation efforts are needed. Safeguarding is an action aimed at ensuring the survival of the ICH, including identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, especially through formal and non-formal education, and cultural revitalisation of its various aspects.

Safeguarding is sometimes equated with ‘preservation’, but the two have different connotations. ‘Preservation’ is a word with static and passive implications, observing culture as an object to preserve. Meanwhile, ‘safeguarding’ focuses on a holistic, human-based understanding. After almost 20 years of using the term *preservation*, the heritage community has moved towards using the term *safeguarding* in terms of ‘preserving’ ICH (Jung-Shim 2021, 27). Safeguarding prioritises human activities in preserving an ICH that belongs to them. This activity involves human and community aspects. Therefore, it can also be asserted that safeguarding involves the preservation of cultural heritage through a combined top-down and bottom-up approach.

Research methods

This research was conducted especially on an Osing family in Banyuwangi. Data were collected by means of in-depth interviews, observation and reading the manuscripts used in the tradition. The tradition of the manuscript-reading session is carried out in connection with certain rituals and uses the same manuscript, which is called the *mocoan lontar Hadis Dagang*. The research participants are family figures and their members in the practice of this tradition. These characters can be people who are directly involved in the tradition or have been involved and are no longer involved. Each tradition studied is taken by one figure and one member to be a research participant.

Questions asked in the in-depth interviews with participants included: Why do you participate in the *mocoan* tradition? Since when has the tradition taken place? What is needed to carry out the tradition? What is needed to carry out the tradition? How is the process of carrying out the tradition? What manuscript(s) are read? What is the content of the manuscript being read? These

questions were asked to clarify elements or domains of ICH contained in the *mocoan* tradition. The observed aspects are also the same as some of the questions given in the interviews, especially related to the process, elements and the manuscript used in the tradition.

An Osing family who supports *mocoan lontar Hadis Dagang*

Mocoan means 'reading (recitation) tradition'; it is derived from Osingnese (the local language in Banyuwangi, East Java, Indonesia). *Lontar* means, in the context of the Osing community, 'manuscript'. *Hadis Dagang* is a manuscript which contains a narration of the Prophet Muhammad. Therefore, the *mocoan lontar Hadis Dadang* means the reading tradition of a manuscript entitled *Hadis Dagang*. As it has been previously stated, the *mocoan lontar Hadis Dagang* is only practised by one family. Therefore, it is said to be rare, unlike another well-known type of *mocoan* – namely, the *mocoan lontar Yusup*. Besides, it is also, as far as the observation goes, conducted once a year. However, what is interesting about the existence of this tradition is that the manuscript has remained intact until this research is done.

This family discussed is Bu Kasri's family in Dusun Delik II, Jambesari Village, Giri District, Banyuwangi Regency of East Java, Indonesia. The manuscript has been inherited from Bu Kasri's husband, Pak Untung. The late Pak Untung inherited this manuscript from his father, Pak Musyawaroh, and his grandfather Mbah Aminah. Mbah Aminah is an elder (the most elder and respected person) in Dusun Delik II. Thus, it can be said that Mbah Aminah's family has preserved the *mocoan lontar Hadis Dagang* through generations to this day. This tradition is carried out in connection with the farm ritual (*nyelameti kebon*), which is held every 10th of Zulhijjah after the Eid al-Adha prayer.

Bu Kasri said, 'The descendants of Mbah [grandmother] Aminah have no courage to neglect the ancestral legacy in safeguarding the tradition of *mocoan lontar Hadis Dagang* in every month of Hajj' (interview with Ibu Kasri, 12 November 2021).

Mocoan, as has been previously stated, is a tradition of reading or reciting manuscript usually done by the Osing community. No one knows exactly when the tradition began, but a Dutchman, J. W. de Stoppelaar, said that in the early 20th century, there was a reading tradition of

lontar Sri Tanjung (De Stoppelaar 1927, 63). *Sri Tanjung* is a manuscript which tells about the loyalty of a wife named Sri Tanjung (Indiarti and Anasrullah 2020). Although De Stoppelaar's account does not explicitly mention the term *mocoan*, it indicates a manuscript-reading tradition, which the Osing people refer to as '*mocoan*' or '*lontaran*' (Arps 1990, 37). After that, it is no longer traceable to the origin of the emergence of *mocoan*. However, it is clear that Osing people now call it *mocoan*, and this is also what Ibu Kasri's family said.

The *mocoan lontar Hadis Dagang* ritual supported and conducted by Bu Kasri's family has not been mentioned by previous researchers. Unlike the *mocoan lontar Yusup*, which is popular and is conducted for many rituals by Osing people, the *mocoan lontar Hadis Dagang* is not well known. It is performed once a year, and the only support comes from Ibu Kasri's family circle. This tradition is done by reciting or singing to a manuscript entitled *Hadis Dagang*.

The *lontar Hadis Dagang* has been made into a text edition by Wiwin Indiarti and Anasrullah (2021). It contains two texts. The first text, which consists of 10 cantos, tells the story of Prophet Muhammad's journey while trading, and the second text, which consists of one canto, contains a dialogue of a character named Samud ibn Salam with Prophet Muhammad about the nature of Allah. The part being read in the *mocoan* is the first text, about the story of the Prophet's journey while trading.

ICH domains in the *mocoan lontar Hadis Dagang*

Oral tradition and manuscript

Mocoan has two elements: the oral tradition and the manuscript as a written tradition – namely, an object that is read, because it remains centred on the text being read. The domain of tradition and oral expression in *mocoan* includes legends, myths, epic poems, prayers and songs (*tembang*).¹ The main features of the oral tradition domains in *mocoan* are epic poetry, prayers and songs, since *mocoan* also means singing a poem that is read. Although it is centred on the text, it is not called a *mocoan* if it is not sung. This plays an important role for the text to come alive. This epic poem is a poem that narrates the story of a character becoming an important figure in a ritual. In addition, epic poetry in *mocoan* is a hope and prayer to achieve the ideals as the figures read in it.

For example, the *mocoan lontar Hadis Dagang* is recited when the farm ritual is carried out, or it is called *nyelameti kebonan*. This is a ritual for environmental safety. The family of Mbah Aminah and Bu Kasri believe that if this ritual is not carried out, they will be met with disaster. In addition, the ritual is a way of thanking God for the blessings that have been received by their family and the environment in which they live. Based on the story of the parents of Mbah Aminah's descendants, the neighbourhood where their family lived was a farm, so they named it *nyelameti kebonan*. At present, the field has become a dense settlement of the Osing people of Mbah Aminah's descendants.

The *lontar Hadis Dagang* as an oral expression can be seen in the lyrics of the song in the form of an epic poem that is sung and read at the same time, to show that the ritual is both an oral expression and a written one, as the manuscript is also read. The manuscript here is ICH as well as tangible heritage because, in addition to the content in the form of intangibles, the physical manuscript is also in the form of manuscript object or codex. There is a relationship between the manuscript content and its oral activities in the form of epic poetry.

The *lontar Hadis Dagang* states something that relates this manuscript to the ritual carried out in *mocoan*, especially in *Pupuh Kasmaran* I: 6, as follows:

*Wong kundanga puniki, padha gawaha tasemak
punika, dimané terang tingalé, yèn rika maca ika,
badhé selamat, selamat kebonan wahu, kang
tetep silahé ika.*

The invited readers [the manuscript readers] bring their glasses so that their vision is clear; if you want to read, want to be safe, be safe in the garden, sit down with full reverence.

From this quote, it appears that this manuscript is indeed a copy of an earlier manuscript. This can be seen from the term *tasemak* ('glasses'), which was probably only became popularised in the 20th century. This means that this writing is not actually the core text of the *lontar Hadis Dagang*, but a text that was written later to start the main story text. This indication was later strengthened by the manuscript colophon, which indicates when the text was copied: the copying of the manuscript was begun on the month of Muharram on the 13th year 1350 H, which



Figure 1
The *lontar Hadis Dagang*.
(Source: Author's collection)

would be 29 May 1931. It is therefore possible that the manuscript which belongs to Bu Kasri's family is a copy. If this conclusion is accepted, then the age of this manuscript is approximately 91 years. Indications that this manuscript is indeed a later copy were added by the copyist in a description at the beginning of the text, especially in the tune called *Pupuh Kasmaran* I:1, which reads *marmané ginurit mangko*, which means 'which was written later'. This indicates that this manuscript is a copy from 1931.

Physically, this manuscript has antique characteristics, since it was written in a Pegon (Perso-Arabic) script, which is rarely used by the Indonesian public. It was also written on European paper from the 19th century. Although called a *lontar*, the material is not *lontar*, or *rontal*, a manuscript material made from tal leaves (Meij 2017, 153). *Lontar* here means referred to as, for example, the *Lontar Yusup*, *Lontar Tawangalun* or *Lontar Ahmad* (Indiarti and Anasrullah 2021, 21). Manuscripts made from *lontar* are widely known in the Hindu-Buddhist tradition of manuscripts, but in Banyuwangi, this term is used for manuscripts with Islamic nuances. This shows harmonisation, sustainability and change in terms of culture in the Osing community.

The manuscript has been digitised by the Digital Repository of Endangered and Affected Manuscripts in Southeast Asia (DREAMSEA), with code number DS 0041 00001. The digitised manuscript can be accessed freely on the DREAMSEA page in the Banyuwangi manuscript collection section. Bu Kasri's family uses the physical manuscript as the 'object' of reading during the ritual of

saving the bounty. It is saved and reopened to be read and developed for certain rituals. Therefore, there is a connection between the manuscript both as a physical object and as an ICH, with oral expression.

Performing arts

The *mocoan lontar Hadis Dagang*, to a certain degree, is also related to the performing arts. The performing arts range from vocal and instrumental music, dance and theatre to pantomime, sung poetry and so on. They include many cultural expressions reflecting human creativity and which are also found, to some extent, in many other domains of ICH. In the context of the *mocoan lontar Hadis Dagang*, vocal art and sung poetry are performing arts.

The *mocoan lontar Hadis Dagang* relies on voice skills and creativity. Without a voice, there is no actualisation in this tradition. This art is the implication of the rules of poetry and song in the text that is read. The *lontar Hadis Dagang* is a manuscript in the form of Javanese traditional poetry, which is tied to the *macapat* meter. This type of song is called *pupuh* ('canto'). *Pupuh* is a song in the Javanese poetry tradition called *macapat*. There are 11 *pupuh* and 151 stanzas in total. There are six types of *pupuh* in the manuscript – namely, *Kasmaran*, *Artati*, *Durma*, *Pangkur*, *Kinanthi* and *Sinom*. The most frequently used *pupuh* is *Artati*, a type which is not found in the *lontar Yusup*.

Types of *pupuh* in *mocoan*, either in the *mocoan lontar Hadis Dagang* or the *mocoan lontar Yusup*, are the same, though there are variations both in rhythm and tone; for example, Kemiren dan Mondoluko have a little variation with

others because of the readers' improvisation. Therefore, tone or rhythm variations of *pupuh* can vary based on hamlet (like Mondoluko) or village (like Kemiren), though the names of *pupuh* in the manuscript are not different.

Each *pupuh*, as previously stated, has a different tone and rhythm. Since the text is bound by the rules (metrum) of the poetry song, the person who reads it must follow the tone and rhythm of the *tembang* or poetry line that is read. In the *mocoan lontar Hadis Dagang*, the reading performance by singing the lines of the manuscript is usually performed by two to four readers (singers) of the song. Not all the texts in the manuscript are recited. Of the 11 *pupuh*, only 10 are sung. One last *pupuh*, *Sinom*, which contains the obligatory attributes of Allah and the Messenger, is not recited.

Although *mocoan* can be categorised as a profane performing art, in fact the sacred dimension is far more important. 'Profane aesthetics' considers something as 'beautiful' if it can satisfy the eyes or ears. Judgement of a certain object as beautiful relies only on sensual pleasures. Meanwhile, 'sacred aesthetics' considers something to be 'beautiful' not because of its own existence, but since it exists to serve the highest purpose, devotion to the divine (Hidayat 2022, 48). This sacred value is believed by the Osing people regarding *mocoan*. Therefore, *mocoan* as a sacred performing art does not depend on the presence of the audience. *Mocoan* will be conducted whether or not there are spectators watching. This is what distinguishes it from profane performing arts, where the presence of an audience is an important factor. *Mocoan* is carried out as a form of worship to the divine to receive blessings. Although *mocoan* is generally performed as a ritual, it is also used in the profane realm, as a performing art or entertainment. This is manifested in the art of *Pacul Gowang*. As a performance art that is purely profane and not sacred, the chanting of the *lontar Yusup* song in the *Pacul Gowang* is done only the introduction or opening of the show. After presenting the *mocoan lontar Yusup* for only a few stanzas, the players use *wangsalan* and *basanan* (Osing language games) or jokes to entertain the audience with humour.

Social and ritual practices

The *mocoan lontar Hadis Dagang* is not only related to the domain of oral expression, manuscripts and performing arts but also to social practices and rituals. They are customary activities inherent in the life of communities and groups, and they are shared by and relevant to many



Figure 2
The *mocoan lontar Hadis Dagang*.
(Source: Author's collection)

of its members. They are important because they reaffirm the identity of the practitioners as a group or society, whether they are done in public or private space, and they are closely related to important events. Social practices and rituals help mark the passing of seasons, events in the agricultural calendar or a person's life cycle. They are closely linked to the community's world view and perception of their own history and memory. These social practices and rituals vary from small gatherings to large-scale social celebrations and anniversaries.

The *mocoan lontar Hadis Dagang* is not only a practice of reading, or a performing art, but also a ritual that is practised jointly by community members. In this case, it is a ritual practice that is carried out together at certain times in the family of Bu Kasri. This ritual is practised to pray for family members' environmental safety. It is associated with an event in the agricultural calendar that initiates an agricultural activity. This ritual is carried out as a marker of their family members. In this ritual, the manuscript, which contains the story of the Prophet Muhammad on a trade trip, is read to take the blessings of the glory and intercession of the Prophet, as is the *mocoan lontar Yusup* (Arps 1992, 134). This reflects a world view that is both Islamic and pre-Islamic.

Unlike other rituals performed by Osing people related to religion, such as *slametan* or marriage, the *mocoan lontar Hadis Dagang* as a ritual is specifically carried out through the tradition of reading a manuscript. The ritual lasts for approximately two to three hours and usually begins around eight in the morning. A group of readers sits cross-legged with several people who are the hosts, lined up in a semicircle on a mat, and they take turns singing the lines of the manuscript in a variety of Osing songs, which have a different pattern of *tembang* tones from Javanese songs in general.

A pillow is placed at the end of the semicircle. On the pillow is placed the manuscript. Nearby are various kinds of ritual instruments known as accompaniments, such as a jug of water, a set of *wanci kinangan* in the form of a set of copper betel utensils and their contents (betel, gambir, *enjet*² and *sisig*³), two cups of coffee, two cups of tea, *toya arum* (fragrance water), a plate of traditional snacks and two plates of rice with side dishes as well as *pengasepan* (a small brazier for burning incense).

When the reading session is about to begin, incense

is burned. The leader of the *mocoan* ritual takes the manuscript from the pillow. He then opens the manuscript to the first page to be ready, carries it above the incense burned in the brazier, and mutters a prayer. The incense-smoked pages are the first two pages of the first *pupuh*.

The leader of the ritual then places the manuscript on the pillow and begins chanting the first two stanzas using a special *pupuh* called *Kasmaran Samudana*, which is only specifically used for the first two stanzas of the *Kasmaran's* opening chant. As with other types of *mocoan*, in the *mocoan lontar Hadis Dagang*, there is also a procession of drinking *banyu arum* – water mixed with various types of flowers that are considered to have certain properties, keeping blessings for those who drink it or use it to wash their face.

In the ritual, the *banyu arum* procession occurs when the story in the manuscript enters *Pupuh Kinanthi X*, the last *pupuh* sung in the manuscript's first text. The chanting of this song begins with a fragment when the Prophet Muhammad, by the will of Allah, revives a dead date tree until it immediately flowers and bears fruit, and clear water comes out of a well that had long been dried up (*Kinanthi X*: 1–2).

*Woten dene Kangjeng Rasul, eca denira alingguh,
angahubing kurma pajah, gedhong sirna empang
aking, irika anuleya kembang, umateng wohira dadi.*

While His Majesty the Messenger, so beautiful he sat,



Figure 3
Ritual equipment for the *mocoan lontar Hadis Dagang*.
(Source: Author's collection)

under a dead palm tree, the leaves were destroyed and the branches were dry. [Because of the blessings] of the Prophet, then the tree blossomed, the fruit ripened and spread.

Sumur asat nuli metu, toya wahening sang badri ngaksi, sembur gesang kurma kembang, anyana kelamun Nabi, sang badri agé tah sira, asujud padéng ngastuti.

The dry well immediately emitted clear water that was witnessed by the priest, [water] spraying the living and flowering dates; it would not have been possible if it weren't for the Prophet; the priest immediately prostrated while worshipping.

This quote on *Pupuh Kinanthi X: 1–2* shows that the reading or tradition of the manuscript is carried out as a means of ritual prayer and gratitude for the fertility of plantation or agricultural land. This is shown by the scene about the Prophet Muhammad and the release of water, creating fertility for the surrounding environment. This means that this ritual also invokes the fertility of land and settlements.

This ritual reflects the relationship between Islam and culture in the Osing community, or Javanese society in general. This is also related to the history of how Islam came and was accepted by the people of Banyuwangi. The existence of an oral tradition of chanting songs based on ancient manuscripts that is still ongoing today shows the important role of ancient manuscripts in shaping the local traditions and culture of the people who own the ancient manuscript heritage (Indiarti and Anasrullah 2021, 6).

The change of Blambangan to Banyuwangi in the mid-17th century became the starting point for the extinction of Hindu-Balinese dominance and the arrival of Islamic influences, although this happened gradually, as well as the power of the Dutch East India Company, continued by Dutch colonials. Nevertheless, Banyuwangi has been inhabited by various ethnic groups: Osing (Using), Madura, *Wong kulonan* (Java), Balinese, Bugis, Mandar, Chinese, Arab (Moors) and European. It is this diversity that imbues Banyuwangi with its multicultural identity, which is represented in the variety of cultures, arts and traditions in Banyuwangi today. However, *Wong Osing* in Banyuwangi, who is believed to be the cultural heir of the past Blambangan, is an important actor in shaping the

identity of present-day Banyuwangi. The chanting of these manuscripts called *lontar* was then widely practised by the Osing people.

In the context of local Islamic discourse, the above-mentioned manuscripts related to the story of the Prophet Muhammad are interesting and important to study. As a form of adaptation from source texts, these manuscripts are not uniform in their interpretation and explanation of certain doctrines, concepts or discourses (Ricci 2010; 2011). The writers and copyists of the manuscripts adapted to the social, cultural and religious environment they encountered. This shows contextual efforts and the Indigenisation of Islam without sacrificing the basic principles of Islam, especially in the fields of *aqidah* (theology) and even *fiqh* (Islamic law). Thus, a study of the texts that are closely related to the various stories of the Prophet Muhammad can make an important contribution in the disclosure and dynamics of the discourse on the story of the Prophet Muhammad related to its history and intellectual traditions wrapped in local aesthetics (Indiarti and Anasrullah 2021, 5). This shows that Islam has been adapted to the language and culture of the local community, in this case, the Osing people of Banyuwangi.

In Banyuwangi, there are at least four ancient manuscripts in the *tembang* style about the Prophet Muhammad: *lontar Hadis*, *lontar Hadis Dagang*, *lontar Ahmad* and *lontar Sipat Nabi* (Indiarti et al. 2021). All four manuscripts – as well as the *lontar Yusup*, which has been widely discussed by researchers – are still alive in the ritual of chanting songs in the Osing community.

Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage

The existence of the *mocoan lontar Hadis Dagang* is directly related to the elements that make up the tradition of chanting the Osing song – namely, manuscripts, variations of *tembang* and rituals. The tradition is a living manuscript practice in the family of Bu Kasri. This manuscript is 'alive' because it is lived by members of Bu Kasri's family. The practice of living manuscripts is not only focused on the manuscripts but also various other ICH domains inherent in this practice. It is true that manuscripts are an important tool in rituals, but manuscripts are not the main purpose of carrying out traditions, and their main purposes are to pray and give thanks. The practice has been inherited from past generations and continues to be practised today.

Thus, the *mocoan lontar Hadis Dagang* is both traditional and contemporary. It has crossed the ages and is still practised today, even when the supporters come from only one family. It can be called a family-based tradition because it is carried out independently by a family that is part of the Osing people in Banyuwangi. It is certainly a tradition that is still widely practised only by this family in Osing community. Therefore, it is a representation of the identity of the people who practise it. On a smaller scale, it has become an 'identity' for Mbah Aminah's extended family; They inherited the practice and carry it out every year.

The most visible element of 'safeguarding' in this tradition is about actions aimed at ensuring the survival of ICH, although not in the form of identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement or transmission; instead, Bu Kasri's family plays a role in revitalising traditions and aspects or domains of ICH inherent in that heritage. The *mocoan lontar Hadis Dagang* has for years guaranteed the survival of the ICH in the form of rituals inherent in the tradition. Indeed, this preservation does not take place formally through education in schools, but the family becomes a informal route in the preservation of ICH in the form of tradition. This tradition also transmits values that are believed by all members of Bu Kasri's extended family and are conceived in the tradition.

With this tradition, this family directly protects the physical existence of the manuscript, which is a means of ritual. Because the physical manuscripts are protected, the scripts and languages in them are also protected. Thus, if script and language store discourse, then this tradition also protect the discourses contained in it, be it a cultural or religious one. Scripts and languages that are no longer used or are rarely used by modern society today live on in printed culture. These manuscript-reading traditions are also identities for the community or their supporting audiences; therefore, this tradition also helps to preserve the unique characters and languages that form their identities, contributing to their long-term sustainability.

The continuation of this tradition will likely affect the copying of manuscripts in the future. Learning from other types of *mocoan*, such as the *mocoan lontar Yusup* tradition, copying is still ongoing. Senari is the copyist who has produced the most manuscripts, especially the

lontar Yusup, since the late 1970s. He also in an orderly manner always writes down the copy number of the *lontar Yusup* manuscript in the colophon (the copyist's note at the end of the manuscript). Senari has produced at least 220 manuscripts of the *lontar Yusup*. He also copied the manuscript of the *lontar Hadis Dagang* at the request of Mbah Aminah's family. Unfortunately, the regeneration process in copying manuscripts did not go well. In his advanced age, Senari is the only person who is still actively copying the *lontar Yusup* manuscript today, and it is his copy that is most often used for various *mocoan*. This indicates that manuscript culture will continue if manuscript copying continues. The problem is precisely people who can copy the characters that have been used in the manuscripts as a means of ritual.

The *mocoan lontar Hadis Dagang* has an important value related to the legacy of its singing tradition. The two *pupuh* contained in the *lontar Hadis Dagang* – namely, *Artati* and *Kinanthi* – have rarely been mastered among *lontar* readers in the tone of the chanting of the song. Because what is popular is the *mocoan lontar Yusup*, only the *pupuh* in the *lontar Yusup* (*Kasmaran*, *Durma*, *Pangkur* and *Sinom*) have been well mastered by the way and tone of chanting the song. Most readers do not master the tone of chanting songs outside of the four *pupuh* contained in the *lontar Yusup*.

The existence of the *mocoan lontar Hadis Dagang* is valuable in enriching the variety of *pupuh* and the tone of the Osing song as one of the ICHs. It is also one of the Osing communities in Banyuwangi who has a sacred role. This institution is related to the way of thinking and way of life of the Osing people, in the cycle of life from birth to death. The institution is realised in the form of a ceremony to seek safety and maintain harmony with the universe. Efforts to preserve and inherit the *lontar Hadis Dagang* are important, not only related to the text and manuscripts but also related to the inheritance of the tone of the *tembang* and the sacred rituals that accompany it as a complete cultural heritage.

The natural conservation efforts that have been carried out by Bu Kasri certainly have several challenges. Among these challenges are the loss of generations and the contestation of religious ideologies. The loss of generations means that the manuscript, as explained above, is only read in the ritual of a family in Banyuwangi. The people who usually have 'tasks' as readers are not

from Bu Kasri's family, but residents of neighbouring villages: Kemiren and Tamansuruh (of Mondoluko Hamlet). In these two villages, the *mocoan* tradition is still ongoing and quite a few are able to read manuscripts, especially *lontar Yusup* (Indiarti 2018). Since the *mocoan lontar Yusup* is functional for many rituals in those two villages, the *mocoan* skill transmission from the elders to the younger generation who feel the importance of the continuation of the tradition. Besides, there is also a new strategy of transmission done by a group of activists at Pesinauan (an Osing Indigenous school).

While the *mocoan lontar Hadis Dagang* is still supported and preserved by a family, it is not members of the family who can read it. Ibu Kasri said:

There is no one in our family who is able to do *mocoan* [performing the *lontar* recitation]. If the ritual *mocoan lontar Hadis Dagang* should be conducted, then we have to ask the services of *lontar* readers [*mocoan* players] from nearby villages, like Kemiren and Taman Suruh (Mandaluko) (interview with Ibu Kasri, 12 November 2021).

This is a challenge in itself for the continuation of this tradition because it is possible that if this family no longer takes care of the traditions and rituals, the readers of the *lontar Hadis Dagang* will no longer read the manuscript because no one is invited to carry out the traditions and rituals of the *mocoan lontar Hadis Dagang*.

This challenge has been realised by activists of Pesinauan. They try to conduct the tradition of *mocoan lontar Hadis Dagang* every year at Pesinauan, a learning space established by Pengurus Daerah Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara (PD AMAN) Osing (Regional Board of the Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago-Osing), aimed at transmitting media and strengthening identity, mindset, way of life and knowledge systems of the Osing Indigenous people. They hope that the successors of the tradition will emerge to ensure its sustainability.

In addition to the issue of generational challenges, equally important is the contestation of religious ideology. This is related to views and debates about the substance of the story contained in *mocoan* tradition and the ritual practices associated with it. On one occasion, we captured a debate about one substance of the story contained in the story of the Prophet Yusuf. According to one view, the

stories contained in the manuscripts read in the *mocoan* tradition 'deviate' from the actual stories contained in the Holy Qur'an, which can actually mislead the reader (interview with one of the religious leaders on 3 August 2020). In addition, if readers take for granted the stories of the Prophet Muhammad in the *lontar Hadis Dagang*, of course they will say that they are rituals that are not true according to Islamic teachings, because other nuanced rituals also include aspects that are not true to Islamic teachings, such as the presence of incense and ritual devices that accompany it. There is a ritual of drinking flower water which is considered to have certain virtues. Formally, these practices – according to some people's religious thinking – will not be accepted, because they will not practise them, and when they do not practise this tradition, it will slowly disappear. A clear thinking strategy is needed to look at this problem so that *mocoan* as an ICH remains sustainable but also pays attention to this issue of religious ideology.

Conclusion

This article has shown that the *mocoan lontar Hadis Dagang*, as a manuscript-reading tradition, is preserved and maintained by the ritual. The tradition can safeguard other ICH domains as well. These domains include oral traditions, performing arts and social-ritual practices. This tradition is still supported by only one family in the Osing community of Banyuwangi. The implementation of this tradition shows a living heritage.

This study concludes that ritual has become a means to preserve living heritage in the form of a manuscript-reading tradition. In addition, the manuscript-reading tradition has contributed to the preservation of various ICH domains. This *mocoan* tradition is a mechanism for grassroots communities in preserving ICH from their ancestors, but this mechanism faces several obstacles, among which the most urgent are the issue of the next generation of tradition and ideological challenges. For this reason, efforts are needed for transmission of this tradition by training family members and younger generations in the village to recite manuscripts.

The fact that Bu Kasri's family supports the ritual and manuscript-reading tradition because it is based on the belief to carry on the traditions from their ancestors, but no family members are able to read manuscripts needs to be further explored. 🇮🇩

ENDNOTES

1. Tembang (Javanese) means song. In the Javanese tradition, there are various types of tembang, which are called pupuhs.
2. Limestone
3. Chewing tobacco

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