

# Manassa Initiates the Digitalization of Nusantara Manuscripts Abroad

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YOGYAKARTA-More than ten thousand of national manuscripts are now scattered abroad. Of that number about half are in the Netherlands and several other locations, such as libraries in the UK and so on. According to manuscript researcher from the Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient (EFEO) France, Henry Chambert Loir, the manuscripts are well maintained though they are abroad.


"We need to be grateful because the texts which are old enough are legally maintained and they were purchased legally, etc.," Henry said on the sidelines of the closing of the 14th International Symposium on Nusantara Manuscript Society (Manassa) at the Koesnadi Hardjasoemantri Cultural Center of UGM on Thursday (13/9). The symposium took place from September 11 to 13.

Henry added even abroad the manuscripts are well maintained. Additionally, the manuscripts which in average are quite old as they were made in the 17th century BC were taken out of the country by legal means and were purchased. He also acknowledged that awareness of foreign people is quite good related to manuscripts and other historical relics.

"Their awareness is higher, for instance, the manuscript is directly handed over to the museum or the government," he said.

Henry appreciated that the symposium can become a means of exchanging information between manuscript experts in and outside the country. A discussion related to the preservation of ancient manuscripts in particular, Henry said, is important to do because they are hard to find, not readily available in bookstores, libraries or museums.

"These old texts are rarely known, bookstores do not sell or provide the materials," Henry said.



In the same place Chairman of Manassa, Dr. Oman Fathurahman, recognized the importance of preserving Nusantara manuscripts located abroad. Currently, Manassa with related parties are pioneering the digitalization of Nusantara manuscripts.

"It's not the original manuscripts that we bring into the country. This takes a lot of fund," Oman said.

In addition to funding issues, Oman added, there are still some other issues such as maintenance, technology, and low public awareness even among the palace of the importance of ancient manuscripts. Not a few people who have economic problems sell them or cannot properly care for their ancient manuscripts.

"Some of the palaces are not open, either, when we are going to revitalize the manuscripts. Hopefully, they will be more open after they know and follow the symposium," he explained.

The 14th International Symposium on Nusantara Manuscript Society (Manassa), according to the Chairman of the Symposium Committee, Drs. Sudibyo, M.Hum, also produced some important recommendations. The recommendations include advice to the government to change some monuments' names, such as Arjuna Wijaya in Jakarta.


"It should be Arjuna Jaya. Because it is not Arjuna Sasrabahu but Pandawa. Well, this is one recommendation that we try to convey as well as several other recommendations," lecturer in the Indonesian Literature Department of UGM said.

The symposium taking the theme The Role of the Palace in the Tradition of Nusantara Manuscript was attended by 185 participants and 35 speakers from abroad.

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