

THE ROLE OF PHOTOGRAPHY AS A MEDIA FOR PRESERVATION OF BALI ANCIENT SCRIPTS

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ABSTRACT

Efforts to save ancient Balinese manuscripts have been attempted since 1928 through the establishment of a special lontar library. Over time, the lontar library began to be seen as less effective in inventorying and in terms of publishing ancient manuscripts. This problem is the reason why ancient manuscripts need to be made an inventory in the form of digitization. Visually digitizing photography is able to give a real picture both in terms of form, message, and elements of the ejection object. Observation and interview methods were used as a research flow and as a practical process in the field. The realization of research related to the digitization of lontar is divided into three stages, namely pre-production (pre-shooting), production (shooting) and post-production (post-shooting). The results of the study show that first, photographic digitization of lontar can be useful for science on a global scale and can be an inventory of Balinese cultural wealth. Second, it is useful to digitally introduce the history of Balinese civilization and provide actual and reliable information. Third, helping the classification process related to the contents of the lontar, the origin of the lontar, and the physical condition of the lontar. Fourth, it makes it easier to do lontar research which can be done anywhere. Fifth, digitizing photography is able to maintain and avoid damage to ancient manuscripts (lontar) as a cultural heritage of a region.

Keywords: *lontar*, digitization, photography, Bali

1. INTRODUCTION

The term lontar is a reference to the work of literary art (the writing culture of traditional Balinese society) which is written on rontal (talle tree leaves). Lontar Bali has a characteristic that is not only media that uses rontal leaves but also uses Balinese script. In the Balinese community, Lontar has different functions depending on the location and the owner depending on the tasks and daily life of the community. In general, lontar have a role not only in terms of spiritual activities but also provide information in the context of science. In general, lontars in spirituality activities have a close relationship with caste communities in Bali, so that lontars that have a religious function or in the context of spirituality are placed or stored in places that are classified as elite, such as the Griya or Puri. This happens because it is the duty and function in society in terms of helping the implementation of religious spirituality. While Lontar which contains scientific information texts consist of literature, traditional medicine, astronomy, advice, history, folklore, kidung, and things of knowledge regarding the daily activities of Balinese people. Lontar is not only found in Griya or Puri because lontar are also generally owned by certain families or privately (family documents).

In 1928, efforts were made to save lontar with the establishment of a lontar library under the name Gedong Kertya. The museum, which is located in Buleleng district, is the only lontar library in Indonesia and even in the world. Lontar is

classified into fifteen types of lontar according to the documentation center of the province of Bali, namely; *kidung, kakawin, geguritan, satwa, parwa, babad, sesana, tantri, usadha, wariga, kanda, kalpasastra, palakerta, mantra astawa, niti sastra*. Each type of lontar does not have a proper classification, because each type of lontar is interrelated and has elements that can be classified with other types of lontar. Judging from the classification and benefits for the Balinese people, of course, efforts must be made to save it in the form of an inventory. In the past, not all Balinese people were able to read Balinese script in lontar. This has the potential to obscure information or stories that are not in accordance with the contents of the text in the lontar. To avoid this, the local government seeks lontars that have an important role in the community to be able to archive, copy Balinese letters to other types of letters (transliteration), and be documented so that in the future it is hoped that in the future they can provide clear and actual information, especially related to information on cultural activities. owned by the Balinese people.

Photography as an art practice is not just a photo that has no meaning, but a photographic work can be interpreted if there is an element of interaction between the creator and the observer. The use of digital photography vehicles has provided opportunities to create various contemporary phenomena, not only for personal enjoyment but also as a place for visual storage and dissemination of an ancient manuscript (Dinata, 2019: 342). For this reason, it is necessary to realize the need for digitalization and the development of solutions in maintaining the values of a culture, especially Lontar Bali.

2. RESEARCH METODOLOGY

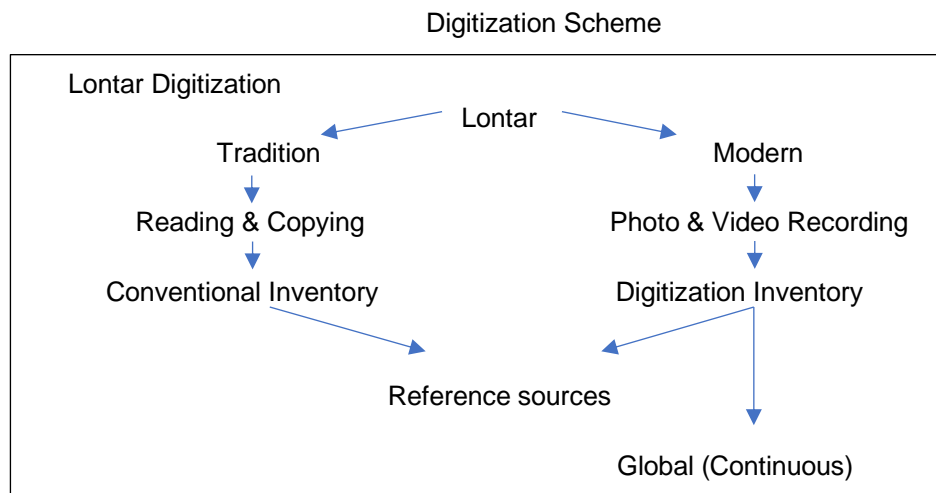
The digitization of lontar is a collaboration program between the Denpasar City Library and Archives Service, Bali Province and the Visual Communication Design study program, Bali Institute of Design and Business. Photographic digitization helps accelerate the process of capturing visuals quickly and detail. Technically, the photographic digitization stage has a high visual quality in both application and duplication. The photographic digitization method has been carried out and has become a solution in preserving the Pekalongan batik culture (Lucius, 2020). If we look at the method and its realization, there are similarities both in terms of technique, objectives and benefits. However, the difference between the digitization of lontar is the values that must be respected in the process.

Based on the results of an interview with I Made Arik Wiraputra as a Balinese language instructor in the Province of Bali (interview, 20 June 2022), the digitization process has steps in its implementation. Before digitizing there are procedures (ethics) or requirements that apply. One example that must be done is if the lontar is classified as a lontar which is often ceremoniously owned by one person or the community, then before the digitization process we have to do the same thing that the owner did to the lontar (ritual). This is a sign of asking for permission and a form of respect for the owner. Other things that must be known are related to the copying agreement, the permission of the entire owner's family, and the permit for the type of lontar that is allowed for digitization.

Based on field observations, the process of digitizing lontar is a process that is not easy because apart from the many types of lontar, the distribution is not known for certain. In addition, not all lontars are permitted by their owners to be duplicated or digitized. This is related to the beliefs that are believed and the rules within the scope of the owner's family. In addition, there are also lontars that are lost or have been damaged so that the language of the characters can no longer be read. So the criteria for the type of lontar to be digitized are all types of lontar that are permitted by the owner and are still physically complete and in good condition.

3. RELATED RESEARCH

The community service program related to the digitization of lontar is divided into three stages, namely the pre-production (pre-shooting), production (shooting) and post-production (post-shooting) stages. The program was implemented at the Bali Provincial Language Center. The following is a schematic of the digitization process:



If we look at the layout of the lontar in the traditional era, it can be seen that it can only be done to the extent of reading and copying. This causes limited efforts to maintain the existence of the lontar. In addition, conventional inventories cause limitations in terms of publication and global realization. That is, technically it is not considered sufficient to be developed and provide alternatives in its distribution into other media as media to support publications.

Meanwhile, in the era of modernity, the efforts made such as digital photo and video recording are able to provide wider options in creating sustainability, both in terms of storage and as a reference that is published globally. What this means is that the digitalization effort provides benefits not only in preserving the ancient manuscripts but also in maintaining the actualization of authenticity both in terms of physical (the existence of lontar) and non-physical (knowledge) in it. Related to the digitization process, the first stage is the pre-shooting stage. The pre-shooting stage was carried out, the first stage was to identify the script. After identification, proceed with the selection of manuscripts (selection stage), sorting of manuscripts (whole manuscripts), and conservation (cleaning and repairing of manuscripts).



Picture 1. Pre-production stage (identification, selection and cleaning of lontar)
(source: personal documentation)

Next is the production stage (shooting stage). Before the shooting stage it is necessary to prepare shooting equipment including cameras, lenses, tripods, computers or laptops, bases and supporting applications. The most important thing from the shooting stage is the visual clarity of objects both in terms of detail, shape and color (real condition). Visually, another important thing about the script is the clarity of the script. In addition, it is able to display the clarity of the physical condition of the manuscript, both in good and bad conditions. This is important to do in digitization because in reality it must be authentic because it will be a reference part of a history.



Picture 2. Production stage (shooting stage)
(source: personal documentation)

The last stage is the post-production stage. The post stage is related to the editing process, setting the file format, and compiling the digital data of the manuscript according to the manuscript page. The final result of the source of digital copying or duplicating the manuscript and realized or stored in libraries (e-library).

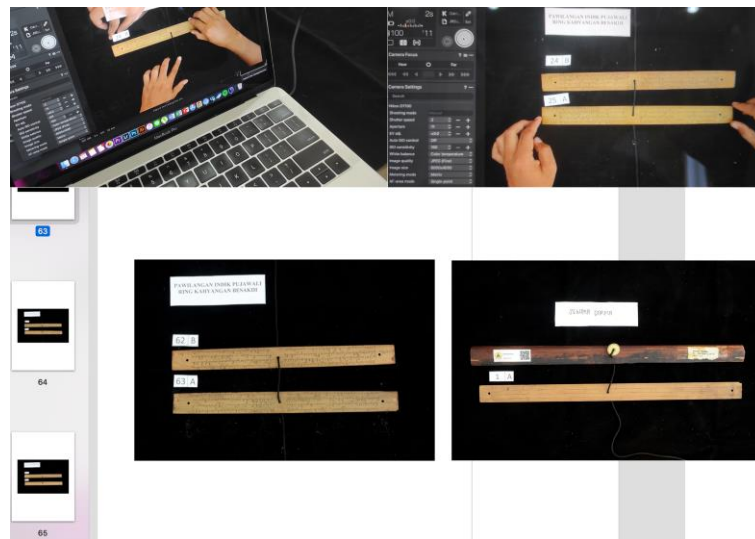


Photo 3. Production stage (shooting stage)
(source: personal documentation)

Balinese people view that Balinese script is a tool for studying all libraries which are loaded with various divine and worldly teachings towards inner and outer happiness (*suka tan pawali dukha*) (Geria, 2011: 84). It should be noted that in lontar there are no word spacings as is the case with text books with Latin letters. Reading the lontar starts from left to right across the middle margin (usually there are three holes for the strap).

4. CONCLUSION

Photographic digitization of lontar is not only capable of being used for science, especially on a global scale, it also provides an opportunity for an inventory of Balinese cultural wealth.

It is useful to digitally introduce the history of Balinese civilization and provide actual and reliable information.

Assisting in the classification process, such as being used as a lontar documentation catalog which serves to help provide information regarding the contents of the lontar, the origin of the lontar, and the physical condition of the lontar.

It makes it easier to research lontars that can be done anywhere without worrying about returning lontars and does not have a limited time for borrowing compared to borrowing lontar in physical (original) form.

Able to maintain and avoid damage to ancient manuscripts (lontar) as a cultural inheritance of a region.

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