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Codicology, Islamization, and Qur'an Manuscripts in Southeast Asia: A Structural Mapping of Scholarship

Kodikologi, Islamisasi, dan Manuskrip Al-Qur'an di Asia Tenggara: Pemetaan Struktural Kajian

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Abstract

Qur'an manuscripts in Southeast Asia represent both sacred texts and dynamic cultural artefacts. Yet scholarship on these manuscripts has developed in a fragmented and regionally uneven way. This article addresses that problem through a structured analytical mapping of fifty-seven peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2002 and 2024. Drawing on a modified systematic literature analysis grounded in the PICOC framework, the study combines PRISMA-based selection with word-frequency analysis and NVivo-assisted thematic coding to trace publication dynamics, methodological orientations, thematic emphases, and geographic coverage in the field. The results show that approximately seventy-three per cent of the analysed studies have appeared since 2018, signalling a marked rise in academic attention to Qur'an manuscripts in recent years. At the same time, around eighty-five per cent of the corpus focuses on Indonesia and Malaysia, leaving Brunei, southern Thailand, the southern Philippines, and other Malay-Islamic polities largely under-represented. The thematic mapping identifies three interrelated clusters Islamization, Manuscripts, and Studies through which research has approached Southeast Asian *mushaf*. Rather than offering a narrative overview, the article treats the existing literature as an empirical corpus for conceptual mapping. By identifying recurring patterns and structural blind spots, it proposes an agenda for more geographically inclusive, methodologically diverse, and theoretically self-aware studies that connect philological and codicological analysis with histories of reading, teaching, and Islamization in Southeast Asia.

Keywords: Qur'an manuscripts; Southeast Asia; systematic mapping; Islamization; codicology; philology

Abstrak

Manuskrip al-Qur'an di Asia Tenggara merupakan teks suci sekaligus artefak budaya yang dinamis. Namun, kajian terhadapnya berkembang secara terfragmentasi dan tidak merata secara regional. Artikel ini menyikapi problem tersebut melalui pemetaan analitis terstruktur terhadap 57 artikel jurnal bereputasi yang terbit antara 2002 dan 2024. Dengan memanfaatkan pendekatan systematic literature analysis yang dimodifikasi dan bertumpu pada kerangka PICOC, studi ini menggabungkan seleksi berbasis PRISMA dengan analisis frekuensi kata dan pengodean tematik berbantuan NVivo untuk menelusuri dinamika publikasi, orientasi metodologis, penekanan tematik, dan cakupan geografis bidang ini. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa sekitar 73% artikel terbit sejak 2018, menandakan peningkatan tajam minat akademik terhadap manuskrip al-Qur'an dalam beberapa tahun terakhir. Sekitar 85%

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korpus berfokus pada Indonesia dan Malaysia, sementara Brunei, Thailand Selatan, Filipina Selatan, dan polities Melayu-Islam lain relatif kurang terwakili. Pemetaan tematik mengidentifikasi tiga klaster saling terkait Islamisasi, Manuskrip, dan Kajian yang menjadi cara utama penelitian mendekati mushaf Asia Tenggara. Alih-alih menyajikan tinjauan naratif, artikel ini memperlakukan literatur yang ada sebagai korpus empiris untuk pemetaan konseptual. Dengan mengidentifikasi pola berulang dan titik buta struktural, studi ini mengajukan agenda penelitian yang lebih inklusif secara geografis, lebih beragam secara metodologis, dan lebih reflektif secara teoretis, yang menghubungkan analisis filologis dan kodikologis dengan sejarah pembacaan, pengajaran, dan Islamisasi di Asia Tenggara.

Kata kunci: *manuskrip al-Qur'an; Asia Tenggara; pemetaan struktural; Islamisasi; kodikologi; filologi*

Introduction

The study of Islamic history in Southeast Asia has long emphasised Islamisation, networks of '*ulama*', and the transmission of texts in law, theology, and Sufism.[1] Within this broader historiography, Qur'an manuscripts have been recognised as important sources,[2] yet they often appear only tangentially as illustrations of Islamisation or as items in catalogues rather than as the primary focus of sustained, systematic analysis.[3] Foundational work by scholars such as Riddell,[4] Gallop,[5] and Ali Akbar[6] has highlighted the richness of Qur'anic manuscript traditions in the region, particularly in relation to textual transmission, regional styles, and pedagogical practice. Still, in comparison with Qur'anic manuscript studies centred on Middle Eastern and European collections, Southeast Asian materials remain under-represented in broader comparative debates.

This relative neglect is striking given the density and diversity of Qur'an manuscripts preserved in mosques, *pesantren*, family collections, and national repositories across Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, southern Thailand, and the southern Philippines. These manuscripts are not merely vessels of the Qur'anic text; they are

1 Hasanulddin Mohd et al., "The Malay Fiqh Manuscripts at the National Centre for Malay Manuscripts: A Pilot Survey," *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 8, no. 4 (April 2018): 671–82; Yasuko Kobayashi, "Tarekat in the Contexts of Indonesian History: Martin van Bruinessen's Work on Tarekat in Indonesia," *Southeast Asia: History and Culture* 1998, no. 27 (June 1998): 112–35, https://doi.org/10.5512/sea.1998.112.

2 Ali Akbar, "Kaligrafi Dalam Mushaf Kuno Nusantara Telaah Naskah-Naskah Koleksi Perpustakaan Nasional RI" (Fakultas Ilmu Pengetahuan dan Budaya Universitas Indonesia, 2005), https://lib.ui.ac.id.

3 Annabel Teh Gallop, "Qur'an Manuscripts from Southeast Asia in British Collections," *Texts and Studies on the Qur'an* 20 (2023): 9–50, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004529397_003.

4 Peter G. Riddell, "Rotterdam MS 96 D 16: The Oldest Known Surviving Qur'ān from the Malay World," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 30, no. 86 (March 2002): 9–20, https://doi.org/10.1080/13639810220134638.

5 Annabel Teh Gallop, "A Remarkable Penang Qur'an Manuscript. Is There a Penang Style of Malay Manuscript Illumination?," *Heritage Asia*, 2004.

6 Akbar Ali, "Mushaf Sultan Ternate Tertua Di Nusantara? Menelaah Ulang Kolofon," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan*, 2010.

material witnesses to histories of Islamisation, regimes of recitation and teaching, and local negotiations of authority and aesthetics.[7] Over the last two decades, growing efforts in cataloguing, conservation, and digitisation by national archives, museums, and individual researchers have begun to make these collections more visible.[8] Nonetheless, the resulting scholarship remains fragmented: case studies of individual codices, descriptive accounts of illumination and rasm, and occasional philological analyses are rarely brought together into a coherent picture of the field.

Since the early 2000s, research on Qur'an manuscripts in Southeast Asia has expanded in both scope and volume. Studies now address a wider range of issues, from codicological features and scribal practices to the roles of manuscripts in education, ritual, and local politics.[9] Yet, despite this growth, there has been no systematic attempt to map the field as a whole, to identify its internal logics, or to situate Southeast Asian Qur'anic manuscript scholarship within global Qur'anic Studies and Islamic manuscript studies. As a result, we know more about individual manuscripts than about the structure of the scholarship that has been built around them.

This article starts from the premise that Qur'an manuscripts in Southeast Asia should no longer be treated as peripheral add-ons to a canon of Qur'anic codices defined primarily by Middle Eastern and European collections. Instead, the region offers a important laboratory for rethinking centre–periphery dynamics in Qur'anic manuscript heritage, for exploring the material religion and social life of Qur'anic manuscripts as objects that mediate Islamisation, devotion, and authority, and for examining how emerging-but uneven-forms of digitisation reshape the field. By tracing how scholars have approached these manuscripts over the past two decades, this study seeks to illuminate not only what has been studied, but also what has been marginalised or left unexplored.

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7 Achmad Yafik Mursyid and Aizan Binti Ali@ Mat Zin, "The Historical Bedrock of Holy Qur'an's Manuscript in Malaysia: A Study on Its Style of Calligraphy and Illumination," *Hamdard Islamicus* 47, no. 3 (September 2024): 3, https://doi.org/10.57144/hi.v47i3.965.

8 Annabel Teh Gallop, "The Appreciation and Study of Qur'an Manuscripts from Southeast Asia: Past, Present, and Future," *Heritage of Nusantara: International Journal of Religious Literature and Heritage (e-Journal)*, ahead of print, 2016, https://doi.org/10.31291/HN.V4I2.84.

9 Nik Narimah Nik Abdullah et al., "Potensi Seni Iluminasi Al-Qur'an Mushaf Malaysia," in *PROCEEDING OF 2ND INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC HERITAGE CONFERENCE (ISHEC 2017)*, ed. MOHD FAIZAL P. RAMELI (ACIS, UiTM Melaka, 2017); Niko Andeska, Indra Setiawan, and Rika Wirandi, "INVENTARISASI RAGAM HIAS ACEH PADA ILUMINASI MUSHAF AL-QURAN KUNO KOLEKSI PEDIR MUSEUM DI BANDA ACEH," *Gorga Jurnal Seni Rupa* 8, no. 2 (November 2019): 351, https://doi.org/10.24114/GR.V8I2.15134; Muhammad Ardhony, "Studi Terhadap Manuskrip Mushaf Su-Aq02/ICH Dengan Iluminasi Melayu Aceh Koleksi Museum Sejarah AL-Quran Sumatera Utra : (Pendekatan Filologis Dan Historisitas)," *Khazanah : Journal of Islamic Studies*, January 31, 2023, 133–41.

Against this backdrop, the article addresses three interrelated research questions. First (RQ1), how has scholarship on Qur'an manuscripts in Southeast Asia evolved between 2002 and 2024 in terms of publication trajectories, venues, and institutional locations, and what does this reveal about the institutionalisation of the field? Second (RQ2), what methodological and thematic patterns characterise this body of work codicological, philological, historical, ethnographic, or digital and how do these patterns converge with or diverge from broader trends in global Qur'anic manuscript research? Third (RQ3), in what ways do recent "digital shifts" in the region, including digitisation projects and the limited adoption of digital tools, open up or foreclose possibilities for future research in digital codicology and the comparative study of Qur'an manuscripts?

To answer these questions, the study employs a systematic, qualitative-dominant mapping of Qur'anic manuscript scholarship in Southeast Asia. Using PICOC-informed search strategies, PRISMA-guided screening, and NVivo-assisted coding, it analyses a corpus of peer-reviewed publications produced between 2002 and 2024. On this basis, the article makes three main contributions. First, it offers a structural map of Qur'an manuscript scholarship in Southeast Asia, identifying key temporal, institutional, and geographical trajectories. Second, it diagnoses the field's methodological and thematic blind spots, including its descriptive tendencies and uneven engagement with ethnography and digital tools. Third, it outlines a forward-looking research agenda that positions Southeast Asia more centrally within global Qur'anic manuscript studies and points towards more theoretically informed, digitally aware, and regionally inclusive future work.

This article makes three main contributions. First, it offers a systematic, software-assisted mapping of Qur'an manuscript scholarship in Southeast Asia, treating 57 journal articles as an empirical corpus rather than as a mere background literature review. Second, by identifying three overarching thematic clusters Islamization, Manuscripts, and Studies it proposes a structural framework for understanding how debates on patronage, materiality, textuality, and pedagogy cohere across the region. Third, by foregrounding the role of digitisation projects and analytical tools, the article conceptualises emerging "digital shifts" in Qur'an manuscript research and outlines an agenda for more methodologically diverse, digitally informed, and regionally inclusive future studies.

Sources and Analytical Procedures

This study adopts a systematic, qualitative-dominant research design that treats the 57 peer-reviewed articles as an analytical corpus rather than as a conventional

background literature review. Instead of merely summarising previous findings, it undertakes a structured mapping of the literature's internal content, examining thematic frameworks, methodological designs, publication trends, and geographical scopes across the studies. Descriptive statistics and visual visualisations are combined with qualitative content analysis to reveal latent patterns and structural tendencies within the field.

To establish the analytical corpus, relevant peer-reviewed journal articles were retrieved from major indexing platforms and digital libraries, including Google Scholar, JSTOR, Scopus, Taylor & Francis Online, SpringerLink, and, where necessary, ResearchGate for accessing already indexed publications. Drawing on the PICOC framework (Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcomes, Context) to structure the review questions and screening criteria, these concepts were used to refine inclusion and exclusion parameters and to maintain conceptual coherence throughout the retrieval process.[10]

The screening of literature was conducted using pre-established inclusion and exclusion criteria. Only peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2002 and 2024, available in full-text, and directly addressing Qur'an manuscripts within the Southeast Asian context were considered eligible. Excluded from the corpus were non-academic outputs such as institutional reports, blog posts, book chapters, and works lacking thematic specificity. The article selection process followed PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines to ensure transparency and methodological rigor.

Data extraction was carried out to capture both bibliometric and substantive dimensions of each article. For every item in the corpus, the author recorded basic metadata, the declared research aims, and the primary methodological approach These variables were first systematised in tabular form to enable descriptive statistical analysis and were then imported into NVivo 12 for qualitative coding. Within NVivo, word-frequency queries provided an overview of dominant terms across the corpus; in combination with close reading of the full texts, these outputs informed the development of a thematic coding scheme that subsequently crystallised into three higher-order clusters, Islamization, Manuscripts, and Studies, which structure the analysis presented in the following sections.

10 B Kitchenham and S Charters, *Guidelines for Performing Systematic Literature Reviews in Software Engineering* (2007),

Corpus of Qur'an Manuscript Scholarship in Southeast Asia

As detailed in the previous section and summarised in the PRISMA flow diagram, an initial pool of 325 records identified through multi-database searches was progressively narrowed to a final corpus of 57 peer-reviewed articles published between 2002 and 2024. Each retained study met predefined criteria of thematic alignment, conceptual depth, and methodological transparency, ensuring that the dataset captured substantive engagement with Qur'an manuscripts in Southeast Asia.

Table 1. Corpus Scope and Relevance Threshold

Screening Criteria Parameters	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Database	Research studies on the topic were published in databases of Google Scholar, JSTOR, Scopus, ResearchGate, Taylor & Francis, and Springer.	Research studies published in other databases were excluded.
Access	Research studies in which there was full access to all contents were included.	Research studies with paid or partial access were excluded.
Time Period	Research studies which took place on the topic between 2002 - 2024.	Research studies conducted before 2002 or after 2024 were excluded.
Type of Studies	Research studies published as peer-reviewed journal articles were included.	Research published as books, book chapters, descriptive or factual studies, newspaper articles, blogs, government reports, etc., were excluded.
Location / Geographic Focus	Research was limited to Southeast Asia, focusing on countries like Indonesia and Malaysia.	Research outside Southeast Asia or not focusing on the specified countries was excluded.

The initial database query yielded 325 academic articles, which were subjected to a multi-stage screening process to establish a structured analytical corpus. A preliminary review of titles and abstracts, applying duplication and relevance filters, narrowed the pool to 297 entries. Recognizing the limitations of abstract-level screening in capturing methodological depth and thematic precision, we introduced two additional filtering stages.

In the first stage of screening, articles were assessed based on four empirical criteria. Priority was given to studies that employed primary data, whether through qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods approaches and demonstrated direct engagement with Qur'an manuscripts in the Southeast Asian context. Literature reviews, catalogues, or secondary reports lacking analytical components were excluded, resulting in the removal of 67 records. Next, thematic and geographical precision was assessed; manuscripts outside the Qur'anic genre or those unrelated to the Southeast Asian context (e.g., Fiqh or African collections) were removed, eliminating an additional 108 entries.

A third standard filtered articles that did not include manuscript-level engagement, such as those offering curatorial or descriptive overviews without content analysis. Studies focusing solely on artistic features without textual analysis, or those using chemical techniques detached from textual context, were also excluded, removing 35 further articles.

Finally, a full-text appraisal ensured methodological transparency and relevance, eliminating 11 articles that lacked analytical rigor. This generated a final dataset of 57 peer-reviewed studies, which formed the empirical corpus for thematic coding, frequency analysis, and conceptual mapping.

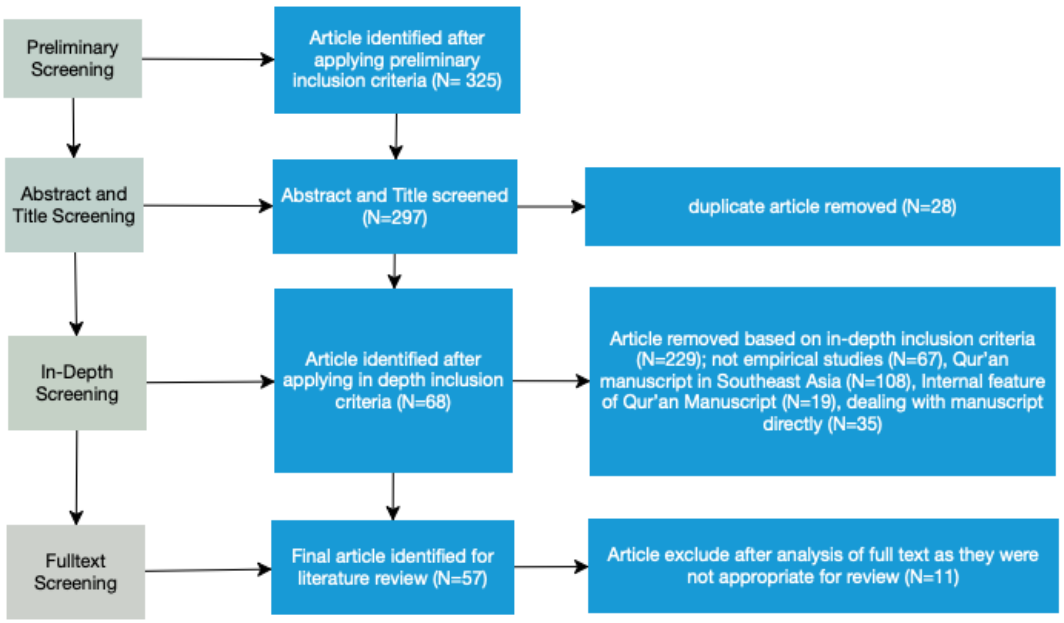


Figure 1. PRISMA flowchart

Temporal Trajectories of Qur'an Manuscript Scholarship in Southeast Asia

Publication Dynamics

The publication timeline reveals a substantial surge in scholarly output over the past five years. Of the 57 articles in the corpus, 42 (approximately 73 per cent) were published between 2018 and 2024. This sharp concentration in recent years marks a clear shift in academic attention toward Qur'an manuscripts in Southeast Asia. The peak occurred in 2023 with ten publications, followed by nine in 2022 and eight in 2021, whereas the early 2000s saw minimal activity, with only two articles in 2004 and a single publication in 2006. This escalation indicates not merely a numerical increase, but a revaluation of Qur'an manuscripts as significant sources for understanding Islam's regional development. While causality cannot be established from this dataset alone, the trend is plausibly linked to the digitisation of manuscript collections, expanded institutional support, and the growing visibility of codicological and illumination studies. Taken together, these dynamics suggest that Qur'an manuscripts are moving from the margins toward a more central position within philological and historical research on Southeast Asian Islam.

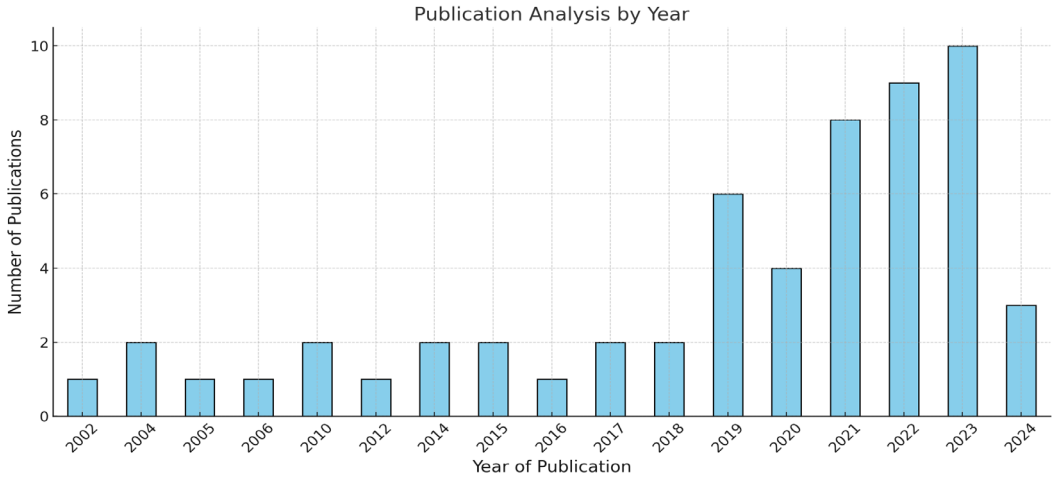


Figure 2. Year of Publication

Methodological Orientations in Qur'an Manuscript Studies

An analysis of the methodological approaches employed in Qur'an manuscript studies reveals a clear dominance of codicological methods, which appear in 26.3% of the articles. This prominence reflects the field's continued orientation toward the physical and visual dimensions of manuscripts, focusing on aspects such as materials,

binding, structure, and illumination. Textological methods account for 17.5% of the studies, particularly engaging with orthographic systems (*rasm*) and modes of recitation (*qira'at*), thereby contributing to the understanding of transmission practices and writing traditions in the Islamic world.

Philological approaches, present in 14% of the corpus, provide critical insights into textual variation and the historical development of Qur'anic texts. In contrast, historical-contextual methods are employed in only 3.5% of the studies, suggesting an underexplored dimension regarding the cultural, political, and ritual environments in which these manuscripts were produced and used. Even more striking is the minimal application of specialized techniques, such as microscopy and visual documentation, each recorded in only 1.8% of the publications.

One striking finding is that 31.6% of the articles do not clearly state the research methods they used. This lack of methodological clarity raises concerns about the reliability and academic quality of these studies, and points to the broader issue of weak standardization in Qur'an manuscript research, especially in Southeast Asia. Many studies tend to rely solely on describing what is visually present in the manuscripts, without linking their observations to any defined methodological approach. This descriptive tendency often leads to surface-level analysis, limiting the potential to understand manuscripts as dynamic cultural and religious texts. To move the field forward, researchers need to engage more deeply with established methods such as codicology, philology, and textology, and combine them with interdisciplinary tools such as ethnography, anthropology of religion, material science, and digital humanities.

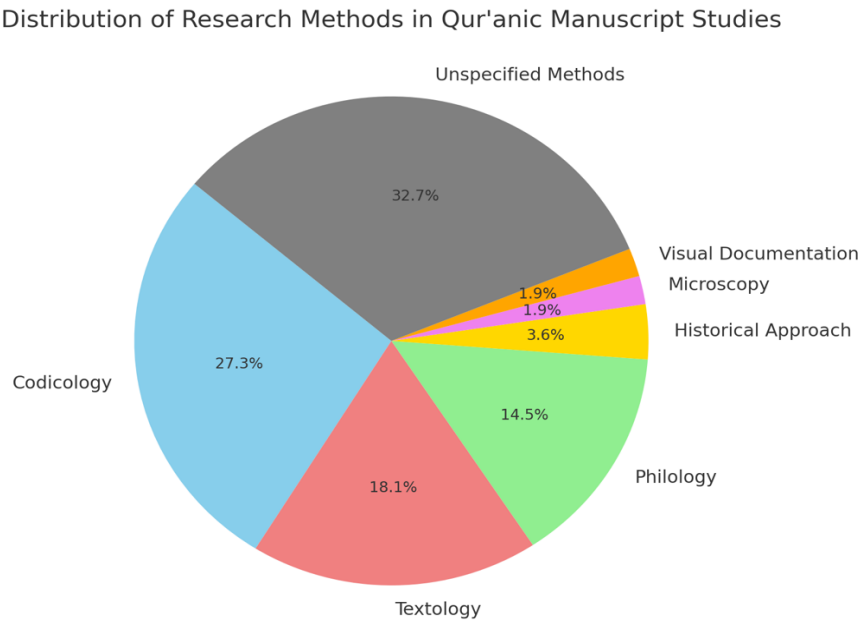


Figure 3. Methodology of research study

Thematic Emphases in Qur'an Manuscript Studies

The thematic distribution of Qur'an manuscript research reveals a diverse yet uneven focus, highlighting distinct scholarly preferences across physical, textual, and interpretive dimensions. A striking pattern is the dominance of studies on illumination and decorative arts, which constitute 27% of the corpus. This prevalence underscores the visual and aesthetic appreciation of manuscripts, particularly in relation to geometric motifs, vegetal patterns, and vibrant colour schemes. Beyond their ornamental value, these elements serve as cultural signifiers that encode the devotional and regional identities of the producing communities. Several studies further enrich this domain by linking illumination with other physical attributes such as calligraphy or manuscript layout, signalling an interdisciplinary trend within aesthetic analysis.

In contrast, research on *rasm*, the Qur'anic orthographic system, accounts for 16%, reflecting a more modest but significant concern with textual structure. This area engages with historical developments such as *rasm imla'i*, *rasm ʿUthmānī*, and hybrid forms, which are crucial for understanding transmission practices, scribal conventions, and certain theological nuances. The fact that rasm studies are much less common than studies on illumination suggests an imbalance in research focus that deserves more attention from scholars.

Calligraphy emerges in 5% of the articles, often exploring scripts like *kufī*, *naskhī*, and regional adaptations that highlight both artistic lineage and readability concerns. Meanwhile, studies on *qirā'āt* (variant recitations) and local language translations each appear in 4% of the dataset, reflecting early efforts to engage with oral transmission and vernacular textuality. Despite their theological importance and pedagogical importance, these fields remain peripheral within the current literature.

Colophon analysis, featured in 3.5% of the studies, provides key insights into scribal practices, patronage systems, and geographic provenance. Often overlooked as ancillary material, colophons emerge as critical sources for reconstructing historical and intellectual networks of manuscript production. Similarly, research on marginalia and tafsīr, which account for only 2%, reveals interpretive dynamics within manuscript culture (commentary, correction, pedagogical notes) that remain underexplored.

Taken together, these thematic trends reveal an emphasis on artistic and material aesthetics, particularly illumination, while textual and interpretive aspects such as *qirā'āt*, vocalization, and marginal commentary remain comparatively less represented. This suggests both a disciplinary inclination toward visual culture and a potential area of growth in exploring theological, philological, and socio-historical inquiries into Qur'an manuscripts.

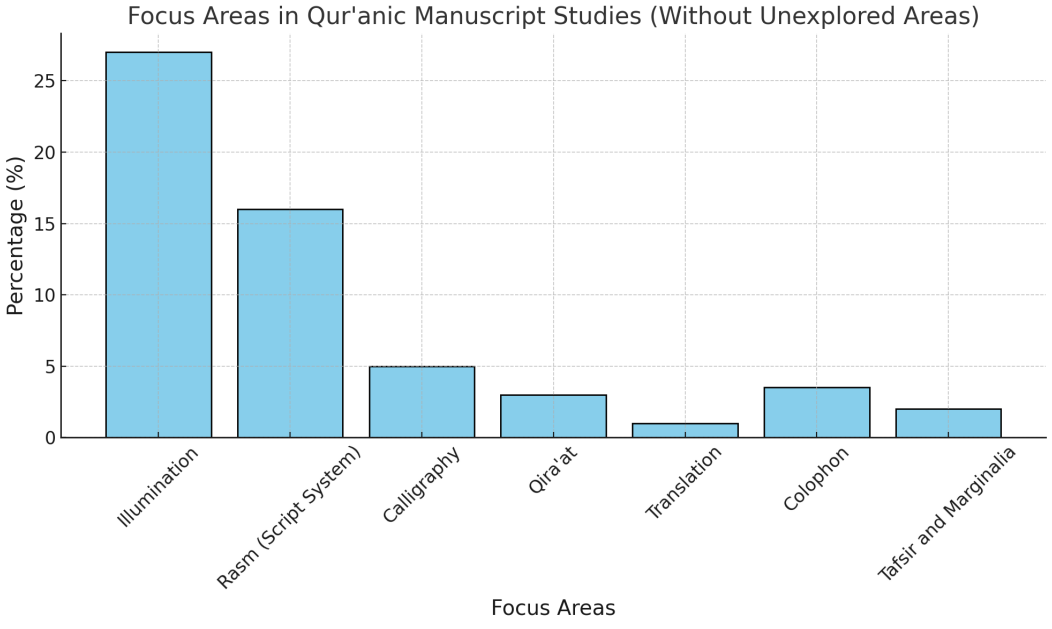


Figure 4. Focus of research study

Qur'ān Manuscript Objects and Regional Coverage

The geographical mapping of Qur'an manuscript collections in Southeast Asia underscores the region's role in the preservation and transmission of Islamic textual heritage. Rather than being concentrated in a few locales, the manuscripts reveal a wide and dynamic distribution. Aceh emerges as a key connection, particularly through the holdings of the Pedir Museum, known for its distinctive illumination styles. In West Sulawesi, the Pambusuang collection of Hj. Rippun and the prolific output of 19th-century scholar Syaikh Zainal Abidin, who produced no fewer than 52 manuscripts, demonstrate the region's vibrant manuscript culture. Similarly, West Kalimantan contributes with manuscripts from the Al-Mukarramah Palace in Sintang and 15 personal copies once owned by Abdurrahman Husin Falugah.

Within the Indonesian archipelago, Java stands out for the volume and diversity of its collections, with manuscripts originating from Kudus, Magelang, and Lamongan, including a notable Javanese translation by Bagus Ngarpah, now preserved at the Radyapustaka Museum in Surakarta. Across national boundaries, Malaysia, southern Thailand, and Brunei likewise present rich Qur'anic textual traditions embedded in the broader Malay-Islamic manuscript milieu, although in the current corpus they appear more selectively than Indonesia and thus invite more sustained comparative attention.

The mobility of manuscripts beyond their places of origin further complicates and enriches this landscape. Several manuscripts from Johor, for instance, are now housed in Dutch collections such as Rotterdam MS 96 D 16, while others have found homes in the United Kingdom. The presence of Southeast Asian Qur'an manuscripts in institutions such as the University of Cologne (COD. Malaiologie 001/2012) illustrates the far-reaching trajectories of these textual traditions and their entanglement with colonial collecting practices and global circuits of knowledge.

Local institutions remain indispensable in conserving these cultural assets and mediating access to them. The Islamic Art Museum Malaysia (IAMM) curates significant collections from the east coast of the Malay Peninsula; the National Library of Malaysia (Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia, PNM) safeguards classical Malay and Qur'anic manuscripts; the Adityawarman Museum in West Sumatra preserves seventeen bundles of Qur'an manuscripts; and the Radyapustaka Museum plays a important role in maintaining and exhibiting Javanese translations.

Several unique features across collections, including the Penang and Terengganu illuminations, Ternate colophons, and hybrid texts like the *Mushaf Sundawi* and Javanese Qur'ans in Jawi script, serve as markers of regional identity, transmission style, and theological aesthetics. The prominence of areas such as Aceh,

central Java, and Riau in the corpus positions Southeast Asia as a central axis in the global history of Qur'an manuscript traditions. At the same time, the migration and preservation of these manuscripts in European institutions highlight their transregional and global significance.

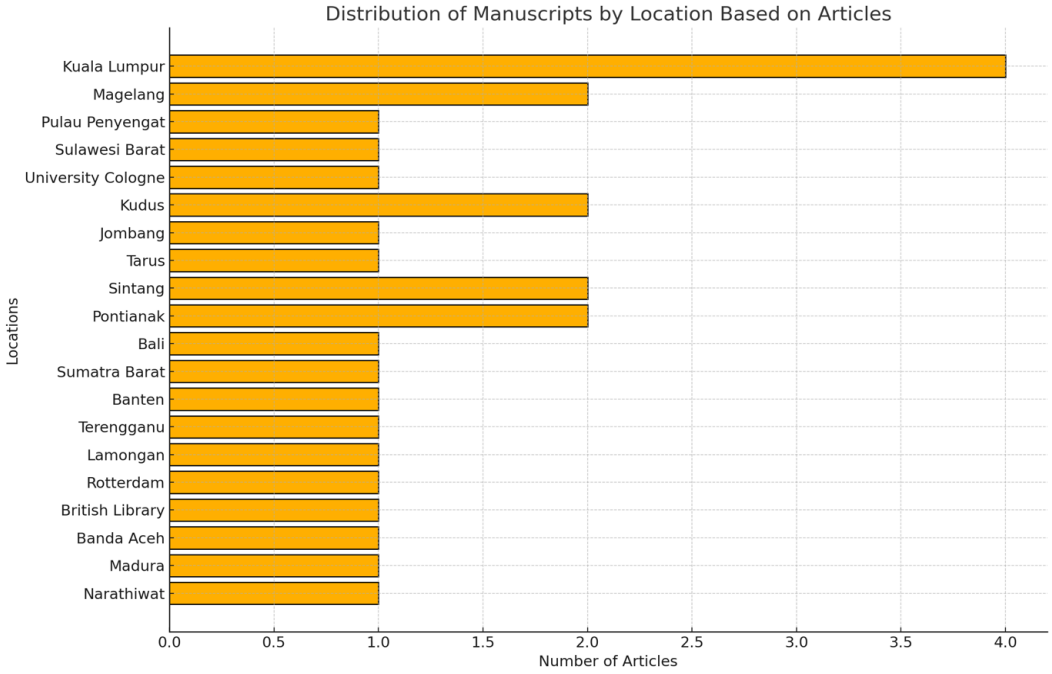


Figure 5. Object of research study

Thematic Landscape of Qurʾān Manuscript Research in Southeast Asia

The word frequency query

Thematic analysis was conducted using the word frequency query tool in NVivo software, which extracted the 100 most frequently occurring terms across the 57 selected publications on Qur'an manuscripts in Southeast Asia. This computational method offers a data-driven entry point into the recurring conceptual landscape of the field, allowing for the identification of dominant themes, subthemes, and semantic clusters. As visualized through a word cloud (see Figure 6), prominent keywords such as *"Qur'an," "manuscript," "mushaf," "writing," "Indonesia," "Malaysia," "tradition,"* and *"illumination"* consistently emerged. These lexical patterns indicate the field's convergence around four primary domains: textual transmission, regional specificity, artistic expression, and preservation practices.

Words such as *"writing"* and *"illumination"* capture the interdependent relationship between form and content in Qur'an manuscripts, reflecting how

religious textuality and aesthetic design operate in tandem. Geographical markers like *"Indonesia"* and *"Malaysia"* not only reaffirm the regional focus of the literature but also point to localized scriptorial traditions and material cultures. Thematic terms like *"tradition"* and *"lines"* reinforce the diachronic dimension of manuscript evolution, while emerging terms such as *"digital"*, *"study"*, and *"preservation"* reflect the growing orientation toward digitization and heritage safeguarding.

Beyond surface frequency, the interrelations among these terms reveal nuanced patterns in scholarly emphasis. For example, the appearance of *"Nusantara"* alongside *"Malaysia"* and *"Indonesia"* underscores the shared yet diverse manuscript heritage within maritime Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, terms like *"patterns," "lines,"* and *"decoration"* demonstrate the visual grammar embedded in manuscript layouts, illustrating how codicological structure and illumination techniques co-produce meaning. Importantly, terms such as *"research"*, *"study"*, and *"digital"* signal a methodological shift toward analytical and preservation-oriented engagements, including the application of technology in manuscript analysis.

The use of NVivo's automated coding reduces the subjectivity typically associated with manual content analysis, thereby offering a statistically grounded thematic mapping. However, frequency alone does not always equate to interpretive value. To enhance analytical depth, the frequent terms were then grouped into three thematic macro-categories, each representing knowledge formations: (1) Geographic and Cultural Context (Islamization), (2) Manuscripts and Textual Elements (Manuscript), (3) Preservation and Maintenance (Studies).



6. Word cloud

Sub-Theme Frequency Query

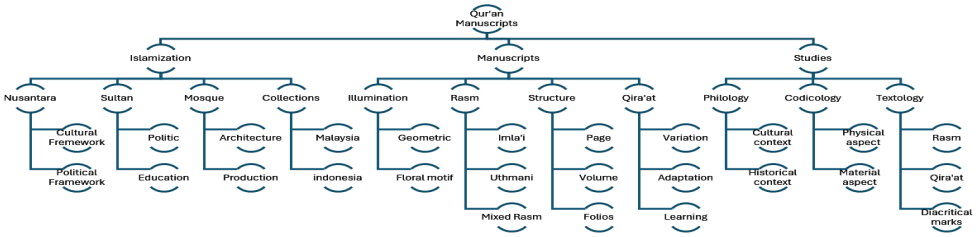
To deepen the understanding of thematic complexity within Qur'an manuscript research, a sub-theme frequency analysis was performed across the three primary clusters identified in the earlier coding: Islamization, Manuscripts, and Studies. This approach enables a more granular examination of specific conceptual dimensions, revealing how scholarly attention is distributed across sociopolitical, textual, and methodological domains.

In the Islamization cluster, the term *"Nusantara"* emerged as the most frequently coded sub-theme (12 occurrences), signalling a strong academic interest in the localized trajectories of Islam's spread across the Malay-Indonesian archipelago. This focus reflects how Islamization was not merely a religious process but a deeply embedded cultural and political transformation shaped by indigenous cosmologies. The sub-theme *"Sultan"* highlights the pivotal role of Islamic rulers in establishing religious institutions, commissioning manuscript production, and promoting Qur'anic education. Similarly, *"Mosque"* serves as a point in the analysis, illustrating the architectural and functional centrality of mosques in manuscript transmission and community-based learning. Finally, the *"Collection"* sub-theme points to heritage preservation efforts, emphasizing the role of Southeast Asian museums and archives in curating Islamic artifacts and anchoring them within contemporary educational and cultural frameworks.

The Manuscripts cluster centres on the material and textual constitution of Qur'an manuscripts. *"Illumination"* leads with 11 mentions, reaffirming the significance of decorative aesthetics, such as geometric and vegetal motifs, not only as artistic embellishment but also as conveyors of symbolic meaning and devotional mood. The sub-theme *"Rasm"* (9 occurrences) reflects sustained interest in the orthographic conventions employed in Qur'anic writing, particularly the localized adaptations of *rasm imlā'ī*, *rasm ʿUthmānī*, and mixed forms. *"Structure"* brings attention to the physical format and construction of the manuscripts, including layout, folio organization, and binding features. Meanwhile, the *"Qira'at"* sub-theme sheds light on variant recitational practices and their pedagogical functions within manuscript traditions, underscoring the interaction between textual standardization and oral transmission in Southeast Asian Islamic education.

The Studies cluster maps the methodological and epistemological framework of the field. *"Philology"* appears as a key sub-theme, illustrating how linguistic and historical analyses are used to interpret textual variation and contextualize manuscripts within broader cultural narratives. *"Codicology"* foregrounds the study of physical manuscript properties, ranging from paper and ink composition to

production techniques, offering insight into the technological, economic, and artisanal environments of the manuscript age. *"Textology"*, often intersecting with *rasm*, *qira'at*, and diacritical studies, represents the analytic engagement with script, orthography, and the adaptation of written Qur'anic tradition to regional literacies and interpretive frameworks.



Interpretive Content Analysis of Thematic Clusters

Islamization: Qur'an Manuscripts and the Making of Southeast Asian Islam

The theme of Islamization emerges as a dominant conceptual framework within Qur'an manuscript studies in Southeast Asia, not merely as a narrative of religious conversion but as a multilayered cultural and epistemic process. Recurring terms such as "Malay," "Nusantara," "Sultan," and "Collection" signal how Islamization is interpreted through a diverse array of lenses, encompassing local political agency, artistic expression, educational practices, and institutional preservation.

The term *"Nusantara"*, appearing 12 times in the corpus, encapsulates the regional identity of the Malay-Indonesian archipelago as both recipient and generator of Islamic traditions. Studies such as Gallop [11] foreground the symbolic role of Qur'an manuscripts in shaping political-religious identity within the context of Malay-Islamic sovereignty. Barakat and Rusli [12], through their analysis of illuminated manuscripts housed at the Islamic Art Museum Malaysia (IAMM), reveal how visual motifs encode Malay-Islamic values, merging scriptural authority with regional aesthetic codes. Extending this transregional narrative, Gallop and Regourd [13] examine the cultural connections between the Malay World and the

11 Annabel Teh Gallop, "Qur'an Manuscripts from Mindanao: Collecting Histories, Art and Materiality," *South East Asia Research*, Routledge, April 2021, 1–45, https://doi.org/10.1080/0967828X.2021.1895674.

12 Heba Nayel Barakat and Nurul Iman Rusli, "The 18th-19th Centuries Qur'ans of the Malay World From the Collection of the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia," *Abgadiyat* 14, no. 1 (May 2019): 30–39, https://doi.org/10.1163/22138609-01401003.

13 Annabel Teh Gallop and Anne Regourd, "ZABĪD AND MANUSCRIPTS FROM THE 'JAWI'

Zabid scholars of Yemen, positioning Southeast Asian manuscripts within a broader Indian Ocean network. Similarly, Nurtawab [14] underscores the pedagogical function of manuscripts, particularly Malay translations and recitation guides, as tools for vernacular Islamization, thus illustrating how local language mediation facilitated deeper religious engagement.

The *"Sultan"* sub-theme (9 occurrences) highlights the role of Islamic rulership in institutionalizing Qur'anic learning and manuscript production. Ardhony [15] documents the educational reforms under the Sultanate of Aceh, noting the strategic patronage of manuscript copying and scholarly training. Azmi and Abdullah [16] provide further evidence through the case of Sultan Omar of Terengganu, whose support for manuscript arts ensured the transmission of both textual and decorative traditions. In a similar vein, Putriani [17] demonstrates how rulers in Sintang, West Kalimantan, used manuscript practices to embed Islamic values into local governance and education. These studies collectively suggest that sultanic authority functioned as a conduit for Islamization, simultaneously shaping theological, aesthetic, and administrative norms.

The theme of *"Collections"* centres on the archival and museological dimensions of Islamic heritage preservation. Gallop [18] identifies a significant underrepresentation of Qur'anic manuscripts within British archival holdings, despite strong evidence of Acehnese traditions in the existing collections. This imbalance is interpreted not merely as a curatorial oversight, but as a reflection of global hierarchies in the preservation of Islamic intellectual history. Andeska et al. [19], focusing on the Pedir Museum in Aceh, underscore the cultural salience of ornamental diversity in manuscript illuminations, tying these features to broader narratives of identity and Islamization in the region.

MALAY WORLD," *Nouvelles Chroniques Du Manuscrit Au Yémen*, 2024.

14 Ervan Nurtawab, "Qur'anic Readings and Malay Translation in 18th-Century Banten Qur'ans A.51 and W.277," *Indonesia and the Malay World*, ahead of print, Routledge, May 2020, https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2020.1724469.

15 Ardhony, "Studi Terhadap Manuskrip Mushaf Su-Aq02/ICH Dengan Iluminasi Melayu Aceh Koleksi Museum Sejarah AL-Quran Sumatera Utra."

16 Riswadi Azmi and Mustaffa Abdullah, "Manuskrip Al-Qur'an Di Alam Melayu: Kajian Terhadap Manuskrip al-Qur'an Terengganu," *Journal of Usuluddin* 45, no. 2 (December 2017): 19–54, https://doi.org/10.22452/USULUDDIN.VOL45NO2.2.

17 Rizki Putriani, "MANUSKRIP AL-QUR'AN DI KABUPATEN SINTANG (Sebuah Deskripsi Awal Atas Manuskrip Al-Qur`an Koleksi Istana Al-Mukarramah Kabupaten Sintang)," *Mafatih* 1, no. 1 (September 2021): 74–83, https://doi.org/10.24260/MAFATIH.V1I1.388.

18 Gallop, "Qur'an Manuscripts from Southeast Asia in British Collections."

19 Andeska, Setiawan, and Wirandi, "INVENTARISASI RAGAM HIAS ACEH PADA ILUMINASI MUSHAF AL-QURAN KUNO KOLEKSI PEDIR MUSEUM DI BANDA ACEH."

Taken together, these sub-themes reveal that Islamization in Southeast Asia was not a monolithic process, but a syncretic and polycentric evolution, mediated through political leadership, regional artistic innovation, and institutional memory. The Qur'an manuscripts serve as both historical witnesses and cultural agents, anchoring Islam within indigenous cosmologies while simultaneously connecting Southeast Asia to the global ummah. This content-based analysis not only affirms the richness of Islamization discourse in the corpus but also foregrounds the role of material texts in the co-construction of religious and cultural identity.

Manuscripts: Material and Textual Forms of the Southeast Asian Mushaf

The Manuscript theme occupies a central position in Southeast Asian Qur'an manuscript research, encompassing artistic, textual, and structural dimensions. This thematic cluster reflects how Qur'an manuscripts operate not only as repositories of sacred text but also as sites of cultural production, theological encoding, and pedagogical design. Frequently coded terms such as *"Illumination," "Rasm," "Structure,"* and *"Qira'at"* underscore the multilayered nature of manuscript practices in the region, linking aesthetic expression with regional orthographic systems and ritualized modes of learning.

The sub-theme of illumination, which appears 11 times across the corpus, receives extensive attention for its symbolic and aesthetic contributions to manuscript production [20]. Gallop [21] illustrates how geometric and floral patterns in Javanese manuscripts encapsulate Islamic cosmological ideals, embedding metaphysical meaning within visual form. Ardhony [22] identifies regional variation in Acehnese ornaments, suggesting localized aesthetics that blend devotional purpose with indigenous art. Similarly, Azmi [23] investigates the geometric motifs of Terengganu manuscripts as visual representations of Qur'anic sanctity. Gallop [24] further reinforces these findings by highlighting unique stylistic idioms in Malay manuscripts from Aceh and Penang.

20 Nailan Rahma, "Sejarah Atau Asal Usul Mushaf AlQur'an Di Sumatera Utara : Studi Terhadap Mushaf AlQur'an Dengan Iluminasi Melayu Pantai Timur Yang Ada Di Museum Sejarah AlQur'an Sumut," *Mimbar Kampus Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Agama Islam* 22, no. 1 (January 2023): 220–34, https://doi.org/10.47467/MK.V22I1.2556.

21 Annabel Teh Gallop, "A Jawi Sourcebook for the Study of Malay Palaeography and Orthography," *Indonesia and the Malay World*, ahead of print, 2015, https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2015.1008253.

22 Ardhony, "Studi Terhadap Manuskrip Mushaf Su-Aq02/ICH Dengan Iluminasi Melayu Aceh Koleksi Museum Sejarah AL-Quran Sumatera Utra."

23 Riswadi Azmi, *Analisis Terhadap Manuskrip Al-Quran Terengganu IAMM 2012.13.6 /* (2018).

24 Gallop, "A Remarkable Penang Qur'an Manuscript. Is There a Penang Style of Malay Manuscript Illumination?"

The sub-theme rasm, with 9 documented occurrences, focuses on orthographic variation and regional adaptation of Qur'anic writing conventions (Syakur and Ulhaq 2022; Syariin and Jamaluddin 2021; Sary and Sayadi 2021; Hasna 2019; A'la 2019, [25] . Studies in this category explore the placement of *rasm ʿUthmānī*, *rasm imlāʾī*, and hybrid forms that integrate Arabic scriptural norms with local scribal preferences. Hermawan et al. [26] analyse manuscripts from Penyengat Island, where mixed *rasm* systems reflect both regional identity and textual fidelity. Fauzi and Azmi [27] document Acehnese adaptations of *rasm* in 17th-century texts, while Sriwati et al. [28] observe similar phenomena in West Sulawesi. Nurtawab [29] explores the interplay between verse numbering and *rasm* in Javanese manuscripts, and Awwaliyah et al. [30] trace how Islamic boarding schools contributed to the localization of *rasm ʿUthmānī* conventions.

The structure sub-theme focuses on the physical organization of manuscripts, including page layout, foliation, and volume composition. Terms such as *"Page," "Volume,"* and *"Folio"* frequently appear, pointing to manuscript design as a critical factor in both functionality and learning. Omar et al. (Omar and Arifin 2022) analyse the spatial geometry of Terengganu manuscripts, revealing visual clarity strategies that aid readability. Nurtawab [31], in his study of manuscripts from Banten, shows that the way the pages were arranged was intentionally designed to support learning, especially for memorizing and reciting the Qur'an.

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25 Qona'ah Dwi Hastuti and Moh Abdul Kholiq Hasan, "MANUSKRIP MUSHAF AL-QUR'AN DAUN LONTAR KOLEKSI KIAI ABDURROCHIM (KAJIAN PEMAKAIAN RASM DAN QIRA`AT)," *Profetika: Jurnal Studi Islam* 21, no. 1 (June 2020): 57–76, https://doi.org/10.23917/PROFETIKA.V21I1.11060; Aulia Rosada, "KARAKTERISTIK RASM MANUSKRIP MUSHAF AL-QUR'AN MBAH HARJO UTOMO (Tinjauan Tekstologi)," *STAI Sunan Pandanaran*, January 2020, https://www.academia.edu/44585080/KARAKTERISTIK_RASM_MANUSKRIP_MUSHAF_AL_QURAN_MBAH_HARJO_UTOMO_Tinjauan_Tekstologi_.

26 Wendy Hermawan, Afriadi Putra, and Wilaela, "Manuskrip Mushaf Al-Qur'an Kerajaan Lingga Di Pulau Penyengat Kepulauan Riau: Analisis Sejarah, Rasm, Dan Qira`āt," *QOF* 7, no. 1 (June 2023): 81–102, https://doi.org/10.30762/QOF.V7I1.994.

27 Fauzi Saleh and Ulil Azmi, "Rasm Manuskrip Mushaf Al-Qur'an: Kajian Terhadap Naskah Koleksi Pedir Museum Aceh Nomor 278/16," *Tafse : Journal of Islamic Studies* 8, no. 1 (2023), https://jurnal.ar-raniry.ac.id/index.php/tafse/article/view/17986.

28 Iin Sriwati, Harlisa, and Syarif, "GAMBARAN MANUSKRIP AL-QUR'AN HJ. RIPPUN DI DESA PAMBUSUANG KABUPATEN POLEWALI MANDAR," *El-Adabi: Jurnal Studi Islam* 2, no. 1 (June 2023): 89–111, https://doi.org/10.59166/EL-ADABI.V2I1.40.

29 Ervan Nurtawab, "Qur'anic Readings and Verse Divisions in 18th-Century Banten Qur'ans A.51, W.277 and RAS Arabic 4," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 51, no. 150 (May 2023): 119–42, https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2023.2213588.

30 Mamlu'il Zaidatul Awwaliyah et al., "HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION OF RADEN KH SHOLEH DRAJAT'S AL-QUR'AN MUSHAF MANUSCRIPT THROUGH THE CODICOLOGICAL APPROACH," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 21, no. 1 (June 2023): 1, https://doi.org/10.31291/jlka.v21i1.1112.

31 Nurtawab, "Qur'anic Readings and Malay Translation in 18th-Century Banten Qur'ans A.51 and W.277."

The theme of *qira'at* further expands the textual dimension of Qur'an manuscripts by documenting the regional variations of recitational practice. Rahmayani and Anggraini & Makmun [32] explore the localized embedding of variant readings within manuscript traditions. Hermawan et al. [33] identify *Qira'at ʿĀṣim* in manuscripts from Penyengat, reflecting cultural influences on oral transmission. Nurtawab [34] demonstrates the contextual flexibility of verse arrangement and *qira'at* practices in Javanese manuscripts, while Putra et al. [35] highlight similar adaptations in Kampar, Riau. Saleh and Azmi [36] investigate the interplay between *rasm* and *qira'at*, emphasizing the co-constitutive nature of orthography and recitation.

Altogether, the Manuscript theme reveals an epistemic infrastructure that links sacred text to material form, ritualized voice, and pedagogical structure. Illumination renders the metaphysical visually intelligible; rasm negotiates fidelity and cultural expression; structure organizes transmission; and qira'at embodies interpretive plurality. These interconnected sub-themes not only reflect regional specificity but also demonstrate how Qur'an manuscripts function as multi-sensory vessels of Islamic knowledge in the Southeast Asian context.

Studies

The Studies theme constitutes a critical axis of Qur'an manuscript scholarship in Southeast Asia, as it illuminates the intellectual, methodological, and epistemological foundations of the field. It encompasses three core disciplinary approaches, philology, codicology, and textology, merge repeatedly in the NVivo coding as preferred lenses for engaging mushaf not merely as fixed textual artefacts but as dynamic cultural systems embedded in regimes of reading, teaching, and preservation.

Within the corpus, philological studies foreground the relationship between Qur'anic text, language practice, and socio-historical context. Aini and Amin [37]

32 Tati Rahmayani, *KARAKTERISTIK MANUSKRIP MUSHAF AL-QUR'AN H.ABDUL GHAFFAR(KAJIAN FILOLOGI)*, 2016; Syania Nur Anggraini and Muhammad Makmun, "Telaah Kodikologi Dan Tekstologi Pada Manuskrip Mushaf Al-Qur'an Raden Soleh Lamongan," *Mutawatir* 12, no. 2 (December 2022): 215–42, https://doi.org/10.15642/MUTAWATIR.2022.12.2.215-242.

33 Hermawan, Putra, and Wilaela, "Manuskrip Mushaf Al-Qur'an Kerajaan Lingga Di Pulau Penyengat Kepulauan Riau: Analisis Sejarah, Rasm, Dan Qira`āt."

34 Nurtawab, "Qur'anic Readings and Verse Divisions in 18th-Century Banten Qur'ans A.51, W.277 and RAS Arabic 4."

35 Afriadi Putra et al., "The Textological Analysis of the Qur'anic Manuscript Written by Syekh Muhammad Said Ranah Kumpai Kampar Riau," *DINIKA : Academic Journal of Islamic Studies* 8, no. 1 (June 2023): 69–91, https://doi.org/10.22515/dinika.v8i1.6678.

36 Saleh and Azmi, "Rasm Manuskrip Mushaf Al-Qur'an: Kajian Terhadap Naskah Koleksi Pedir Museum Aceh Nomor 278/16."

37 Adrika Fithrotul Aini, "Identifikasi Naskah Dan Klasifikasi Corrupt Manuskrip Mushaf Al-Qurâ€™an

highlight how philological analysis decodes not only the linguistic structures of manuscripts but also the socio-historical conditions under which they were produced. Gallop[38], examining British Library manuscripts, interprets the decorative grammar of geometric and floral motifs as reflections of Islamic cosmological principles embedded in text-art interplay. Ardhony[39], focusing on Sulawesi collections, further reveals how illumination serves as a cultural expression of Qur'anic reverence, linking form with spiritual meaning.

Codicology, as the study of the material and structural dimensions of manuscripts, provides a second pillar in the Studies cluster. Research by Fais et al., Jaeni & Musadad, Rohmana, and Ali Akbar [40] demonstrate how codicological analysis reveals regional specificities, such as local paper types, ink compositions, binding styles, and pagination systems, that reflect the intersection of Islamization and indigenous knowledge systems. Saleh and Azmi [41] document structural features of 17th-century Acehnese manuscripts, illustrating how physical form encodes cultural values. Similarly, Sriwati et al. [42] examine the Rippun collection in West Sulawesi, emphasizing how materials were selected and processed in accordance with local ecological and economic resources. Nevertheless, this mapping still rests largely on discrete case studies; there remains considerable scope for developing "digital codicology" that would enable cross-collection comparison through high-resolution visual documentation and standardised databases.

Textology opens a third window onto the adaptive life of the Qurʾānic text in Southeast Asia. As explored by Hakamah [43], textological inquiry engages with *rasm*,

Koleksi Perpustakaan Pondok Pesantren Tebuireng," *AL QUDS : Jurnal Studi Alquran Dan Hadis* 4, no. 1 (May 2020): 1, https://doi.org/10.29240/alquds.v4i1.1173; Faizal Amin, "MANUSCRIPT OF MUSHAF AL-QUR'AN IN WEST KALIMANTAN FROM THE COLLECTION OF ABDURRAHMAN HUSIN FALLUGAH (d. 2010 AD)," *Al-Albab*, 2014.

38 Gallop, "Qur'an Manuscripts from Southeast Asia in British Collections."

39 Ardhony, "Studi Terhadap Manuskrip Mushaf Su-Aq02/ICH Dengan Iluminasi Melayu Aceh Koleksi Museum Sejarah AL-Quran Sumatera Utra."

40 Nor Lutfi Fais, Abdul Jamil, and Sukendar Sukendar, "Mushaf Blawong Gogodalem: Interpretasi Sejarah Melalui Pendekatan Kodikologi," *SUHUF* 15, no. 1 (October 2022): 123–45, https://doi.org/10.22548/SHF.V15I1.703; ahmad jaeni and Muhammad Musadad, "Tipologi Mushaf Kuno Nusantara Di Brunei Darussalam," *SUHUF* 11, no. 2 (December 2018): 215–36, https://doi.org/10.22548/SHF.V11I2.417; Jajang A. Rohmana, "Empat Manuskrip Alquran Di Subang Jawa Barat (Studi Kodikologi Manuskrip Alquran)," *Wawasan: Jurnal Ilmiah Agama Dan Sosial Budaya* 3, no. 1 (June 2018): 1–16, https://doi.org/10.15575/JW.V3I1.1964; Alii Akbar, "Manuskrip Al-Qur'an Dari Sulawesi Barat Kajian Beberapa Aspek Kodikologi," *SUHUF* 7, no. 1 (June 2014): 101–23, https://doi.org/10.22548/SHF.V7I1.123.

41 Saleh and Azmi, "Rasm Manuskrip Mushaf Al-Qur'an: Kajian Terhadap Naskah Koleksi Pedir Museum Aceh Nomor 278/16."

42 Sriwati, Harlisa, and Syarif, "GAMBARAN MANUSKRIP AL-QUR'AN HJ. RIPPUN DI DESA PAMBUSUANG KABUPATEN POLEWALI MANDAR."

43 Zaenatul Hakamah, "Ortografi Mushaf Al-Qur'an Nusantara Abad Ke-18 M: Kajian Manuskrip

qira'at, and diacritical systems, uncovering how Southeast Asian scribes negotiated between canonical orthodoxy and vernacular readability. Hermawan et al. [44] analyze manuscripts from Penyengat Island, where mixed *rasm* reflects cultural hybridity in scriptural practice. Saleh and Azmi [45] demonstrate that regional variation in *rasm* does not undermine the textual integrity of the Qur'an, but rather affirms a localized logic of preservation. Sriwati et al. [46] similarly observe the incorporation of *qira'at* traditions in Sulawesi manuscripts as part of a broader pedagogical adaptation. This textological perspective suggests that Qurʾān manuscript research cannot be separated from the wider field of *ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān*; yet explicit connections between these findings and the discourses of tafsīr, tajwīd, or the history of qirāʾāt remain relatively underdeveloped in the current corpus.

Re-centring Southeast Asia in Global Qur'anic Manuscript Studies

The mapped corpus confirms that Qur'an manuscript scholarship in Southeast Asia has undergone a marked acceleration, particularly since 2018, with a peak between 2020 and 2024. This acceleration correlates with technological advances in digital preservation [47] and a renewed regional and global focus on Southeast Asia as a manuscript-rich zone of Islamic history. Much of this output is concentrated in Indonesia and Malaysia, supported by expanding postgraduate programmes, increased access to local collections, and the institutionalisation of manuscript research in archival and museum settings. This concentration does not simply reflect where manuscripts are located; it also indicates where intellectual infrastructures (research groups, funding schemes, and editorial boards) have coalesced around Qur'an manuscripts as a legitimate object of sustained inquiry. In this sense, the field's growth challenges any residual assumption that Southeast Asian Qur'an manuscripts are peripheral to a canon still implicitly defined by Middle Eastern and European collections.

Mushaf al-Qur'an Batokan Kediri," *Mutawatir* 12, no. 1 (June 2022): 1–23, https://doi.org/10.15642/MUTAWATIR.2022.12.1.1-23.

44 Hermawan, Putra, and Wilaela, "Manuskrip Mushaf Al-Qur'an Kerajaan Lingga Di Pulau Penyengat Kepulauan Riau: Analisis Sejarah, Rasm, Dan Qira"āt."

45 Saleh and Azmi, "Rasm Manuskrip Mushaf Al-Qur'an: Kajian Terhadap Naskah Koleksi Pedir Museum Aceh Nomor 278/16."

46 Sriwati, Harlisa, and Syarif, "GAMBARAN MANUSKRIP AL-QUR'AN HJ. RIPPUN DI DESA PAMBUSUANG KABUPATEN POLEWALI MANDAR."

47 Alba Fedeli, "The Digitization Project of the Qura¯nic Palimpsest, MS Cambridge University Library Or. 1287, and the Verification of the Mingana-Lewis Edition: Where Is Sala¯m?," *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts*, ahead of print, 2011, https://doi.org/10.1163/187846411X568768.

At the same time, the structural map reveals that Southeast Asian scholarship has not yet fully leveraged this potential to reposition the region within global Qur'anic Studies. While selected studies explicitly situate local manuscripts in conversation with broader debates on codicology, rasm, and textual history, many remain framed primarily within national or provincial historiographies. The three thematic clusters (Islamisation, Manuscripts, and Studies) show that the field has developed internally coherent lines of inquiry. Yet these lines are only sporadically connected back to global conversations on Qur'anic manuscript heritage, canonical readings, or the history of the muṣḥaf. The field is thus at a transitional moment: sufficiently mature to map and analyse, but still in need of stronger outward-facing links to international debates.

Material Religion and the Social Life of Qur'an Manuscripts

The Islamisation cluster underscores how Qur'an manuscripts have been mobilised as material anchors of Islamisation in maritime Southeast Asia. Studies in this cluster foreground the roles of mushaf in pedagogy, ritual, transmission of barakah, and local regimes of religious authority. They demonstrate that Qur'an manuscripts are not static artefacts but active participants in the construction of piety, communal memory, and territorial claims to Islamic legitimacy. At the same time, these studies tend to privilege specific sites Aceh, West Java, West Kalimantan, Mindanao over others, and they rarely develop an explicit vocabulary of *material religion* or *lived religion* to theorise these dynamics. This confirms earlier historiographical insights by Azra[48] and Johns[49] that Islamization in the Malay–Indonesian world was mediated through networks of ʿulamaʾ and Sufi scholarship, but adds a new textual and material layer by demonstrating how these processes are inscribed in colophons, translation practices, and illumination regimes.

The Manuscripts cluster reveals the depth of codicological and art-historical engagement with Qur'anic manuscripts in the region. Scholars accurately document illumination schemes, page layout, rasm conventions, orthographic features, and scribal practices, often with high-quality visual analysis. This work has been crucial in identifying regional styles, tracing workshop lineages, and reconstructing the trajectories of particular codices across time and space. Yet, taken together, the cluster

48 Azyumardi Azra, "The Transmission of Islamic Reformism to Indonesia: Networks of Middle Eastern and Malay-Indonesian 'Ulama' in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries" (Columbia University, 1992), https://www.proquest.com/docview/303986118?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true&sourcetype=Dissertations%20&%20Theses.

49 Anthony H. Jhon, "Qur'anic Exegesis in the Malay World: In Search of a Profile," in *Towards a History of the Interpretation of the Qur'an*, ed. Andrew Rippin (The Clarendon Press, 1987).

shows a persistent tilt toward "what the manuscripts look like" over "how they circulate and are inhabited". The social life of manuscripts as endowed objects, teaching tools, or contested symbols appears in the background rather than as a primary analytical focus. The structural map therefore suggests a need to integrate codicology an art history more explicitly with anthropological, sociological, and historical approaches that foreground everyday engagements with the muṣḥaf.

The Studies cluster serves as a methodological backbone for the field, making visible how scholars characterise their approaches and situate their work within broader disciplinary frameworks. It shows a modest but growing engagement with qualitative content analysis, historical contextualisation, and, to a lesser extent, ethnography. However, the cluster also reveals that a significant proportion of articles either do not name a method explicitly or rely on generic formulations such as "descriptive analysis". Few contributions articulate how their methodological choices relate to ongoing debates in Qur'anic Studies or *ʿUlūm al-Qurʿan* for instance, how findings on rasm, orthography, or marginalia might inform classical discussions of *qirāʿāt*, *tajwīd*, or *ʿilm ʿadd al-ay*.

Methodological Gaps and Interdisciplinary Potentials

A first blind spot concerns the geographical distribution of research. The corpus shows a strong concentration on Indonesia and Malaysia, while Brunei, southern Thailand, the southern Philippines, and smaller Malay-Islamic polities appear only at the margins. This imbalance does not simply reflect where manuscripts exist, but where scholarly attention has been directed. As a result, important Qur'an manuscript traditions in these areas are rendered methodologically "peripheral", even though comparative work on their illumination styles, rasm systems, and pedagogical uses could significantly refine current narratives of Islamization and manuscript circulation in maritime Southeast Asia.

A second blind spot is methodological. The corpus confirms the centrality of historical and textual approaches, yet these are often applied in ways that abstract manuscripts from their lived contexts. Only a small proportion of studies probe how mushaf are taught, recited, inherited, or displayed, or how they participate in contemporary regimes of piety and learning. Ethnographic and anthropological perspectives remain rare, even though they are well suited to tracing the "social life" of manuscripts as objects that move between homes, pesantren, museums, and markets.[50] Likewise, explicit engagement with the categories of ʿUlum al-Qur'an is

50 Brinkley Morris Messick, *The Calligraphic State: Textual Domination and History in a Muslim Society*, with Internet Archive (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993),

limited: rasm, *qirāʿāt*, and tafsir are frequently described at the descriptive level, but seldom related to classical debates on canonical readings, tajwid, or verse division.

A third blind spot concerns how digital technologies are conceptualised. Digitisation projects and online repositories are frequently mentioned as sources of images, but only a handful of studies treat digital infrastructures, metadata, or viewing interfaces as part of their explicit methodology. More experimental uses of digital tools such as systematic image comparison, structured metadata analysis, or digitally assisted collation are largely absent from the corpus. This does not mean that Qur'an manuscript research in Southeast Asia must become a "digital humanities" subfield, but it does suggest that the analytical possibilities created by digitisation remain under-explored and could, if carefully integrated, help link codicological and textual insights across collections and regions.

A further blind spot lies in the limited use of comparative frameworks. Local adaptation is a recurrent theme, but it is usually examined through isolated case studies of a single collection, region, or patron. Rarely are Acehnese, Javanese, Malay-peninsular, or Mindanao manuscripts systematically set alongside one another to trace convergences and divergences in illumination, rasm, verse division, or *qiraʿat*. Building on broader reflections on Islamization as a polycentric process[51], comparative designs could show more clearly how regional Qur'an manuscript traditions intersect, overlap, or diverge, and thereby move the field beyond a series of disconnected local histories.

Conclusion

This article has undertaken a systematic analytical mapping of Qur'an manuscript scholarship in Southeast Asia over the past two decades. By assembling and coding a corpus of peer-reviewed studies published between 2002 and 2024, it has traced how research on Qur'an manuscripts in the region has expanded in volume, diversified in topic, and become increasingly institutionalised within universities, museums, and religious organisations. The analysis has identified three major thematic clusters (Islamisation, Manuscripts, and Studies) that structure the field, as well as distinctive temporal, institutional, and geographical trajectories. Taken together, these patterns show that Qur'an manuscripts have moved from being occasional illustrations of Islamisation to becoming central objects of scholarly attention in their own right.

51 A. H. Johns, "Islamization in Southeast Asia: Reflections and Reconsiderations with Special Reference to the Role of Sufism," *Southeast Asian Studies* 31, no. 1 (June 1993).

At the same time, the map reveals enduring asymmetries and gaps. Geographically, Indonesia and Malaysia dominate the corpus, while Brunei, southern Thailand, the southern Philippines, and other Muslim communities in the region remain comparatively understudied. Methodologically, codicological and descriptive approaches prevail, with limited use of ethnography, comparative frameworks, or the conceptual resources of *ʿUlūm al-Qurʾan* and Qur'anic Studies. Digitally, Qur'an manuscripts are often the beneficiaries of preservation projects but rarely the objects of sustained digital analysis. These blind spots suggest that the field, while vibrant, has yet to fully exploit the potential of its sources or to position Southeast Asian evidence at the centre of global debates on the history, materiality, and reception of the Qur'an.

Ultimately, by mapping how Qur'an manuscripts in Southeast Asia have been studied, this article seeks to contribute not only to regional scholarship but also to the broader field of Qur'anic Studies. It suggests that attending to the material, social, and digital lives of Qur'an manuscripts in so-called peripheral zones can generate new perspectives on Islamisation, textual transmission, and the cultivated aesthetics of devotion. In doing so, it invites further work that treats Southeast Asian Qur'an manuscripts not as marginal curiosities, but as central interlocutors in ongoing conversations about the Qurʾān, its manuscripts, and their place in the history of Islamic thought and practice.

Supplementary Materials

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Authors' contributions

All listed authors contributed to this article. Achmad Yafik Mursyid wrote the original draft, reviewed and edited it, and wrote the formal analysis, Aizan Binti Ali@ Mat Zin. compiled the resources, conceptualised the study, and managed the project administration. Faisal@ Ahmad Faisal Bin Abdul Hamid was responsible for the methodology and validation and supervised the project

Data availability statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Conflicts of Interest

None of the authors of this study has a financial or personal relationship with other people that could inappropriately influence or bias the content of the study.

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Appendix A. List of publications analyzed (n=57)

The following table lists the author(s), article title, and year of publication.

No	Author	Title	Year
1	Peter G. Riddell	Rotterdam ms 96 d 16: the oldest kmnown surviving qur'ān from the malay world	2002
2	Annabel Teh Gallop	An acehnese style of manuscript illumination.	2004
3	Annabel Teh Gallop	Is there a penang style of malay manuscript illumination?	2004
4	Annabel Teh Gallop	The spirit of langkasuka? illuminated manuscripts from the east coast of the malay peninsula.	2005
5	Annabel Teh Gallop, Ali Akbar	The art of the Qur'an in banten: calligraphy and illumination.	2006

6	Abdul Rajabi and Idries Trevathan	The 19th-century malay qurʾān: a comparative study of materials and techniques.	2010
7	Annabel Teh Gallop	The art of the malay Qur'an	2012
8	Ali Akbar	Manuskrip Al-Qur'an dari Sulawesi Barat Kajian Beberapa Aspek Kodikologi	2014
9	Faizal Amin	Religion and heritage: the islamic manuscript of the quran by abdurrahman husin fallugah.	2014
10	Annabel Teh Gallop	The art of the Qur'an in Java.	2015
11	Edwin Wieringa	The idea of an old Qur'an manuscript: on the commercialization of the indonesian islamic heritage.	2015
12	Annabel Teh Gallop	The appreciation and study of Qur'an manuscripts from southeast asia: past, present, and future.	2016
13	Annabel Teh Gallop	Audiences and an artist: illumination in malay literary manuscripts.	2017
14	Riswadi Azmi and Mustaffa Abdullah	Manuskrip Al-Qur'an di Alam melayu: kajian terhadap manuskrip Al-Qur'an terengganu.	2017
15	Tati Rahmayani Nun	Karakteristik manuskrip mushaf Alquran h. abdul ghaffar	2017
16	Ahmad Jaeni	Tipologi mushaf kuno nusantara.	2018
17	Jajang Rohmana	Empat manuskrip Al-Qur'an di subang jawa barat (studi kodikologi manuskrip Al-Qur'an).	2018
18	Ali Akbar	Manuskrip Al-Qur'an di thailand selatan: koleksi dan migrasi.	2019
19	Heba Nayel Barakat and Nurul Iman Rusli	The 18th-19th centuries Qur'ans of the Malay World: From the Collection of the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia	2019
20	Hanifatul Asna	Karakteristik manuskrip Al-Qur'an pangeran diponegoro: telaah atas khazanah islam era perang jawa.	2019
21	Hanifatul Asna	Characteristics of the Qur'anic manuscript from menoreh magelang.	2019
22	Iskandar Mansibul A'la	Manuskrip mushaf Al-Qur'an koleksi ponpes Al-yasir jekulo.	2019

23	Niko Andeska, Indra Setiawan, and Rika Wirandi	Inventarisasi ragam hias aceh pada iluminasi mushaf Al-quran kuno koleksi pedir museum di banda aceh.	2019
24	Adrika Fithrotul Aini	Identifikasi naskah dan klasifikasi corrupt manuskrip mushaf Al-Qur'an koleksi perpustakaan pondok pesantren tebuireng.	2020
25	Qona'ah Dwi Hastuti, Moh. Abdul Kholiq Hasan	Manuskrip mushaf Al-Qur'an daun lontar koleksi kiai abdurrochim (kajian pemakaian rasm dan qira'at).	2020
26	Ervan Nurtawab	Qur'anic readings and malay translations in 18th-century banten Qur'ans a.51 and w.277.	2020
27	Ahmad Syari'in and Jamaluddin	Manuskrip Al-Qur'an di masjid agung jamik singaraja bali: kajian filologi Al-Qur'an.	2021
28	Ajeng Pudyastuti Budi Wanodya	Manuskrip mushaf Al-Qur'an pondok pesantren jogorekso gunungpring magelang.	2021
29	Annabel Teh Gallop	Qur'an manuscripts from mindanao: collecting histories, art and materiality.	2021
30	Mhd. Idris and Inda Marlina	Characteristics of The Qur'anic Manuscript of Syeikh Surau Tanjuang	2021
31	Muhammad Azam	The Malay quran manuscripts in muzium negara.	2021
32	Pramono	Khazanah Naskah Al-Quran Koleksi Museum Adityawarman: Deskripsi dan Kekhasannya	2021
33	Rini Kumala Sary and Wajidi Sayadi	Manuskrip mushaf Al-Qur'an ismahayana, kabupaten landak (sebuah studi awal tentang aspek kodikologi).	2021
34	Rizki Putriani	Manuskrip Al-Qur'an di kabupaten sintang (sebuah deskripsi awal atas manuskrip Al-Qur'an koleksi istana Al-mukarramah kabupaten sintang).	2021
35	Abdul Jamil	Mushaf blawong gogodalem: interpretasi sejarah.	2022
36	Agus Malik, Yully Eka wardhani, and A Ibrahim	Visual study of hanjuang motif illumination in the Qur'an mushaf sundawi.	2022

37	Ervan Nurtawab and R Adi Deswijaya	Verse numbering system and arabic references in bagus ngarpah's early 20th-century javanese qur'an.	2022
38	Hadiana Trendi Azami, Achmad Yafik Mursyid, Muhammad Bagus Febriyanto	Manuskrip Al-Qur'an dan Terjemah Jawa K.H. Bakri Koleksi Masjid Besar Pakualaman: Sejarah, Karakteristik, dan Identitas	2022
39	Moh Syakur and Rafdi Dhiya Ulhaq	Prince paku ningrat's Qur'an manuscript at the sumenep palace in 1793: its characteristics and analysis.	2022
40	Riswadi Azmi, Mustaffa Abdullah, Zulkeefli Awang, Mohd Nurudin Puteh, Siti Sarah Izham, and Mohd Farhan Md Ariffin	Sumbangan sultan omar (m. 1876) dalam penulisan manuskrip quran terengganu pada abad ke 19.	2022
41	Siti Azwanie Che Omar and Sedek Ariffin	Analysis of manhaj rasm in surah Al-baqarah: a study of manuscripts Al-quran mss 4322 by pangeran jimat.	2022
42	Syania Nur Anggraini and Muhammad Makmun	Manuskrip mushaf Al-Qur'an raden soleh drajat lamongan.	2022
43	Zaenatul Hakamah	Mushaf Al-Qur'an batokan: a study of the 18th century manuscript.	2022
44	Ervan Nurtawab	Qur'anic readings and verse divisions in 18th-century banten Qur'ans a.51, w.277 and ras arabic 4.	2023
45	Afriadi Putra, Muhammad Yasir, Lukmanul Hakim, Wendi Hermawan	The textological analysis of the Qur'anic manuscript by syekh muhammad said ranah kumpai kampar riau.	2023
46	Ervan Nurtawab	Qur'anic readings and verse divisions in 18th-century banten Qur'ans a.51, w.277 and ras arabic 4.	2023
47	Fauzi Saleh and Ulil Azmi	Rasm manuskrip mushaf Al-Qur'an: kajian terhadap naskah koleksi pedir museum aceh nomor 278/16.	2023

48	Iin Sriwati, Arlisa, Syarif	Gambaran Manuskrip Al-Qur'an Hj. Rippun di Desa Pambusuang Kabupaten Polewali Mandar (Studi Kodikologi dan Filologi)	2023
49	Annabel Teh Gallop	Qur'an manuscripts from southeast asia in british collections.	2023
50	Mamlu'il Zaidatul AwwAliyah, Fatikhatul Faizah, Muhammad Alwi HS, and Nurul Hasanah	Historical interpretation of raden kh sholeh drajat's Al-Qur'an mushaf manuscript through the codicological approach.	2023
51	Mazni Omar, Marzuki Ibrahim, Imran Abdullah, Razi Yaakub, Hartini RazAli, Siti Fairuz, Md Hashim, Mohd Daud, and Ribangun Jakaria	Identification of basic geometric structures in the illumination of terengganu quran manuscript (l.m.n.t 2002.1).	2023
52	Muhammad Ardhony	Studi terhadap manuskrip mushaf su aq02/ich dengan iluminasi melayu aceh koleksi museum sejarah Al-Qur'an sumatera utara.	2023
53	Wendi Parwanto, Riyani	Codicology of the Qur'an manuscript in islamic sultanate Al-mukarramah sintang district, west kalimantan.	2023
54	Wendy Hermawan and Afriadi Putra, Wilaela	Manuskrip mushaf Al-Qur'an kerajaan lingga di pulau penyengat kepulauan riau: analisis sejarah, rasm, dan qira'āt.	2023
55	Annabel Teh Gallop and Anne Regourd	Zabīd and manuscripts from the 'jawi' malay world.	2024
56	Husnul Fahimah and Annabel Teh Gallop	A prolific 19th-century bugis scribe: syaikh zainAl abidin and his personal catAlogue of Qur'an manuscripts.	2024
57	Achmad Yafik Mursyid and Aizan	The historical bedrock of holy qur'ón's manuscript in mAlaysia: a study on its style of calligraphy and illumination.	2024