

## MANUSCRIPT DECORATIONS: ILLUMINATIONS AND ILLUSTRATIONS ON SOME EXISTING MANUSCRIPTS IN KERINCI

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### ABSTRACT

This research is presented to examine the decoration contained in the manuscripts in Kerinci, because it is seen from the problem that in the development of civilization and the tradition of writing manuscripts it is common to change the form of illumination and illustration in manuscripts due to various factors which are the result of human creativity. For the method that the author uses in this research is using a qualitative method with a codicological approach, whose primary source focuses on several Kerinci manuscripts that have been digitized. Then for other sources this research is assisted by references such as books, articles, and other sources related to this study. The result of this paper is knowledge and description of the decoration on the manuscript in the form of illumination and illustration on several manuscripts found in the Kerinci region in the form of manuscript decoration and explanation of the meaning of the contents of the manuscript.

**Keywords:** Decoration, Script, Illumination, Illustration, Kerinci.

### ABSTRAK

*Penelitian ini dihadirkan untuk menelisik hiasan yang terdapat pada naskah yang ada di Kerinci, dikarenakan dilihat dari persoalan bahwa dalam perkembangan peradaban dan tradisi penulisan naskah lumrah terjadi perubahan bentuk iluminasi maupun ilustrasi pada naskah karena disebabkan oleh berbagai faktor yang merupakan hasil dari kreativitas manusia. Untuk metode yang penulis gunakan dalam penelitian ini yaitu memakai metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan kodikologi, yang sumber primernya berfokus kepada beberapa naskah-naskah Kerinci yang sudah digitalisasi. Kemudian untuk sumber-sumber lainnya penelitian ini dibantu oleh referensi seperti buku, artikel, dan sumber lainnya yang berkaitan dengan kajian ini. Adapun hasil dari tulisan ini adalah pengetahuan dan deskripsi tentang hiasan pada naskah berupa iluminasi dan ilustrasi pada beberapa naskah yang terdapat di wilayah Kerinci yang berupa hiasan naskah dan penjelasan dari makna isi naskah.*

**Kata Kunci:** Hiasan, Naskah, Iluminasi, Ilustrasi, Kerinci.

### INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is known for its diverse cultures inherited by the previous ancestors, be it in the form of activities that were originally carried out by them, as well as their legacies, whether in the form of objects or writings to be addressed to the next generation (Tim Ditjenbud, 2000, p. 4). This ancestral culture has an invaluable value, as evidenced by the facts in the field showing the discovery of many manuscripts throughout Nusantara which are one of the relics of the previous ancestors (Nopriani, 2020, p. 21). Manuscript or *naskah* in Indonesia, is a work in the form of handwriting from humans in which it explains various forms of expression of feelings and activities of people who have lived



in the past, so the existence of manuscripts is one of the important sources of information for humans living in the present era (Amin, 2011, p. 91).

Talking about ancient manuscripts in Indonesia, Kerinci is one of the places that has a lot of ancient manuscripts seen from the geographical location or place of the region Kerinci is an area located in the highlands of the Bukit Barisan mountains and stretches along the western cluster of Sumatra Island. In addition, Kerinci is also part of Jambi Province, where the region has many hills, clear rivers, resulting in the land becoming fertile, perhaps this factor makes the interest of the community to inhabit this area. On the other hand, the people of Kerinci are also known for their steadfastness in maintaining the culture of their ancestors and their relics both in the form of objects and written ones, such as one of the ancient manuscripts (Putri et al., 2019, p. 3).

To find out what is in these manuscripts, several stages of science are needed, such as codicology, which is the science related to codices (Abdullah et al., 2019, p. 33). The codex is defined as handwritten material, one of the most important parts of the manuscript base is the existence of manuscript decorations both in the form of manuscript edge decoration and has no relationship as an explanation of the content of the manuscript (illumination) or decoration on the manuscript in the form of symbols, flora images, fauna images, and other forms have a function as an explanation of the content of the manuscript itself (Lubis, 1996, p. 55). Thus it is very clear that codicology as a method that helps a researcher of ancient manuscripts in finding scientific information and can get information about the material or base of the manuscript itself. besides that, there are various factors that cause changes in the shape and style of illumination and manuscript illustrations that will make the study of manuscript decoration interesting to study carefully.

Seeing the large number of ancient manuscripts in Kerinci, it does not rule out the possibility that research on ancient manuscripts on illumination and illustration has been discussed by previous researchers and for researchers who have discussed research on this illumination; Faras Puji Azizah with the theme Iluminasi on the Bamboo Manuscript "Karang Mindu" Collection of Bakhtiar Hanif Kerinci, in the article she researched explaining about codicology, and illumination contained in only one manuscript, namely the Karang mindu manuscript and is a collection of Bakhtiar Hanif (Azizah, 2023, p. 21).

Based on the results of the researcher's review, the discussion of illumination and illustration of the manuscript in Kerinci is very minimal whereas as a researcher, especially those who focus on philology, really need sources related to the manuscript. Because this is the reason for researchers to discuss this study more deeply, seeing the lack of attention to research that discusses the themes that researchers will discuss, namely Illumination and Illustration Manuscript Decoration on some Nasah in Kerinci. This research is certainly different from what has been discussed by previous researchers where here researchers not only discuss the illumination on the manuscript but also discuss the illustrations that exist in the manuscripts in Kerinci,

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besides that researchers also make some manuscripts in Kerinci to be used as samples or examples of what is meant by illumination and illustration in a manuscript, even in terms of different manuscripts. For researchers, this research produces a source of knowledge and information that is very important for everyone because to know the contents of a manuscript, we must first know the form of the manuscript because it has a high artistic spirit, Because the previous people wrote manuscripts that still exist today are written in a variety of models that sometimes have decorations on the edge of the paper and even have their own meaning. That is why we need to learn about illumination and illustration in order to reveal the facts contained in a manuscript not only in terms of content, form, motifs / jewelry but all the ins and outs. In this context, it is the manuscripts in Kerinci.

### **METHOD**

The main method that researchers use in this study is to use a qualitative method by conducting a data collection process through literature studies, whose primary sources focus on several Kerinci manuscripts that have been digitized in several places whose sources have been accessed online such as one of the collections of *lektur Kemenaq. Go.id* which is an information portal in Indonesia and other sites (Anggito & Setiawan, 2018, p. 235). Then for other sources, this research is assisted by references such as books, articles, and other studies which of course have a connection with the studies that will be discussed by this researcher and in this qualitative research, do not forget that researchers conduct an analytical descriptive method of sources or data that researchers have obtained (Abdussamad, 2021, p. 30). Because it discusses the ins and outs of the manuscript in the form of decoration, researchers also use a codicology approach which is the science of codex explaining the ins and outs of manuscripts and codology is also one of the branches of philology (Fathurahman, 2015, p. 69). By conducting a codicological study of several manuscripts in Kerinci, it is known that the illumination and illustrations in the manuscript provide important information about the social and cultural aspects of the lives of previous people, such as the art model at that time or habits in the form of oral traditions that they then put into writing so that they can be read by their successors.

### **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Manuscript Decoration**

##### ***Illumination***

Illumination comes from the word *illuminate*, which means lighting if you explain the meaning of illumination, namely to make something clearer or easier to understand, or to decorate something with light, the purpose of illumination is to make something clear or easier to understand or to decorate something with lighting (Maharsi, 2013, p. 100). According to Gallop and Arps, the word illumination in Indonesian is *sungging art*, while in Yogyakarta it is called *renggan wadana*, also stating that illumination is an image that functions as a framing for a text (Galop & Arps, 1991,



p. 79). It can be explained that illumination itself is an inseparable part of a manuscript which later became a tradition in manuscript writing in Sumatra which marked the beginning of a historical era where writing was recognized.

Another opinion was expressed by Oman Fathurahman, he explained that what is meant by illumination is gold decoration in a manuscript, but in its development it is now used to describe all forms of decoration or decoration in manuscripts. Whether it is located on the first page of the manuscript, the middle or the end of the manuscript (Fathurahman, 2015). Illumination is a decoration on the manuscript that aims to beautify the manuscript, illumination on the manuscript can be related to the text or vice versa. Overall, the illumination on manuscripts in Sumatra has several models that cover all parts of the manuscript page decoration. Illuminations on manuscripts in Sumatra form and style according to the era and period, generally include:

1. Frame decoration in the form of flora and fauna, as well as other forms.
2. Rubrication, which decorates parts of the text to mark important parts of the text.
3. Punctuation or punctuation that marks important metres and tunes at the end of a verse.

Then Folsom explained that initially the term illumination was used in gilding some manuscript pages to obtain beauty and was usually placed as a decoration or frontispiece of the manuscript (Galop & Arps, 1991). The term illumination in its development refers to decorative equipment related to colors or metallic pigments and is designed to increase the value of the appearance of the manuscript, including, among others, decorated text frames, verse markers, juz markers, and letter head marks in the Koran, so there are various types of illumination that have functions and placement of decorations contained in manuscripts that not only function to beautify the appearance of the manuscript but also to mark a manuscript.

In relation to the use of the terms illustration and illumination, Mulyadi explains that the decoration found on a manuscript can be divided into: illumination, which is a frame decoration that is usually found on the first page and possibly on the last page; and illustration, which is a decoration that supports the text. The two terms are often used interchangeably in the study of European manuscripts. However, they are always used differently in the study of Islamic manuscripts (Mulyadi, 1994, p. 69). The motifs used in illuminations are geometric motifs, flora motifs, fauna motifs, human motifs, motifs of natural or scenic objects, as well as motifs of technological objects and calligraphy. The motifs are generally arranged repetitively in a symmetrical pattern, resulting in a symmetrical, regular, and harmonious illumination arrangement. According to Gallop and Arps, the creativity of illumination makers is usually realized in the form of decorations on the cover page and the last page of the manuscript in the form of intertwined leaf and branch motifs, geometric patterns, and floral motifs (Galop & Arps, 1991).

Illumination as a work of art emerged from the collapse of antique culture and developed in the Middle Ages Illumination itself is the art of embellishing books or

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manuscripts with paintings or ornate letters and geometric shapes, with gold and colors, especially on the edges of the pages. Illumination as a form of art, is not a direct development of the art of writing, because simple writings on unadorned pages cannot be considered as illumination (Syarif, 2021, p. 43). At first, illumination was a term used for the gilding of some manuscript pages to achieve beauty. In later developments, illumination refers to images in manuscripts that are usually on the front page of the manuscript, which serves to decorate the manuscript. As one of the parts of ancient manuscripts, illumination, which is often found on various manuscripts, such as Javanese, Malay, Sundanese, and so on, is considered a symbol of identity (Ekowati, 2017, p. 80).

Illumination not only functions as decoration but also shows the regional characteristics of the place where the manuscripts come from and are meaningful signs. This is also in line with what safari explained that illumination can also help explain the origin of the manuscript because each region has its own character of illumination motifs, in addition to the subjectivity of the illuminator's style (Mustafa & Zpalanzani, 2011, p. 30). In addition, illumination can also support the estimation of the time when the manuscript was written or copied because the artists who made the illumination were witnesses of the times. Still in the context of the same opinion, according to Gallop and Arps, illumination in Malay manuscripts is closely related to the views and experiences of the Malay community at that time. The creativity of the illumination makers is realized in the form of decoration on the front page and the last page of the manuscript in the form of intertwined leaf and branch motifs, geometric patterns, and floral motifs (Galop & Arps, 1991).

Based on the above, illumination is an aesthetic element in manuscripts that is not just to decorate the manuscript but generally has an identity symbol that is a reflection of the region where the illumination was made. The form of reflection of different places makes the illumination in the form of frame decoration very diverse and interesting which marks the progress of civilization in the place of manuscript making which symbolizes the culture of the people in the place of manuscript making, explains the geography and topography of the place of manuscript making, becomes a symbol of power specifically for illumination found on manuscripts made by rulers, and other meanings. This diversity can be found in ancient manuscripts scattered throughout the archipelago including in Sumatra which is a world cultural heritage that should be preserved and preserved.

### ***Illustration***

According to Shieny in his book illustration is an image or the result of a graphic process that helps decorate, accompany or clarify a sentence in a text in directing understanding for the reader (Shieny, 2020, p. 8). Then the next opinion was expressed by Alfian Rokhmansyah who defined illustration as a decoration that supports the text, usually illustrations are found in medical texts or those that explain about something such as geographical location, body organs, forms of flora and fauna and so on (Rokhmansyah, 2018, p. 62).

The definition of illustration is also stated by Oman Fathurahman, he defines illustration as visualization in the text in the form of pictures, photos, paintings, or others, and usually serves to explain the meaning of certain sentences in the text (Fathurahman, 2015). Another opinion is expressed by Harry Wibowo, he defines illustration as a two-dimensional image that enlivens and decorates as well as clarifies a text that is reproduced by printing techniques in black and white or color in the form of hand-drawn drawings, photographs, diagrams or graphics (Maharsi, 2016, p. 4).

From some of the opinions above, it is clear that what is meant by illustration is the decoration on the manuscript in the form of images or visualization on the text that serves as an explanation of the content of the text contained in a manuscript, things that can be studied from illustrations are not much different from the study of illumination that distinguishes the purpose and meaning of the visualization contained more clearly and more easily understood such as the form and use, besides research such as the history of the development of decoration in the form of illustrations and the cultural meaning contained therein can also be studied. The existence of illustrations in the manuscript is closely related to the communication process by visualizing what the illustrator wants to convey. Its early history appeared since the early paleolithic to Neolithic era in the year 35,000 to 4000 BC in the form of drawings or scribbles on the walls of caves.

In Indonesia, there are also historical relics regarding this visualization process, namely the discovery of drawings or graffiti in Abba Cave, Risatot, Duri in the Kei Islands which are estimated to be 1000 years old. This visualization process will be related to the following two terms, namely, pictograph and codex. It is clear that the process of making illustrations with visualization has long been done in the world until the discovery of manuscript mats in the form of paper, bark, animal skin, bone, tandung, bamboo and other media that are used as a place for making illustrations.

### **Illumination Decoration on Some Manuscripts Found in Kerinci**

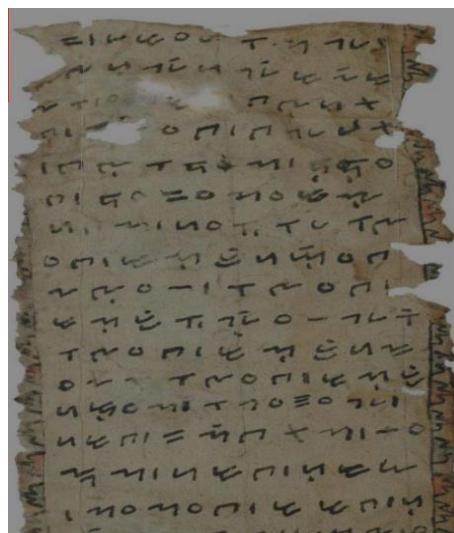


Figure 1. Illumination on Incung Kerinci Manuscript.

Source: Indonesian Information Portal <https://images.app.goo.gl/cD2rnbh5dbCmPB4A8>

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In this incung manuscript (figure 1) there is illumination found on the edges of the manuscript, the boundaries of the manuscript pages, and at the beginning and end in the form of engravings.

Incung script is one of the scripts used by the Kerinci tribe who have occupied the highlands, in terms of meaning Incung means tilted or tapered (according to Kerinci language) (Mubarat, 2015, p. 166). Incung script is formed from straight lines, broken tapered, and even curved, Incung script is one of the relics of Kerinci's ancestors which in the past Incung was used as a document about history, literature, customary law, and mantras. When viewed from the contents of this Incung manuscript, it explains two things, namely about Tembo and Karang Mindu. Tembo is a traditional writing that explains the story of the journey and genealogy of the ancestors of a group or clan, while Karang Mindu explains the prose that contains an expression of the sadness of the author of the manuscript.



Figure 2. Illumination on Incung Kerinci Manuscript on Bamboo.  
Source: Hafiful Hadi Sunliensyar Documentation, 2018

The bamboo-based manuscripts (figure 2), decorated with incung script, reveal a deep cultural and artistic uniqueness. The incung script is not only a means of communication, but also a window into the history and values of Kerinci society. Moreover, these carved motifs are not just decorations, but also storytellers that reveal the cultural heritage and philosophy contained in each line. Thus, this manuscript is not only a witness to history and an inscription carved on bamboo, but also a work of art that blends with the identity and cultural wisdom of the Kerinci people.





Figure 3. Illustration on the Manuscript of a Charter Letter from the Sultan of Inderapura to the Regent in Kemantan, Kerinci.

Source: Kerinci Cultural and Customary History Information Center.

In exploring the beauty of the manuscript of a letter from the Sultan of Inderapura to the Depati in Kemantan (figure 3), Kerinci, we encounter a work that is not only a written communication, but also an artistic hue that reflects the greatness and identity of the Sultanate. Made of paper and decorated with Malay Arabic script (jawi), this manuscript exudes the wisdom of Islamic culture that underpinned the lives of the people at that time. One of the interesting aspects of this manuscript is the illumination in the form of border decoration that resembles Islamic calligraphy. The border decoration brings us to a distinctive artistic nuance and illustrates the elegance of the art of Islamic calligraphy. Every stroke and curve of the decoration seems to summarize the beauty of Islamic art tatahias that is thick with Sultanate aesthetics. The calligraphic motifs embedded in the margins of the manuscript give a touch of elegance and luxury, showing that this letter is not just an ordinary message, but a manifestation of the Sultan's greatness and the majesty of the Sultanate of Inderapura. Besides being a means of communication, the manuscript also serves as a symbol of the Sultan's power and legitimacy. The Malay Arabic script used as a writing medium emphasizes Islamic identity in the context of local culture. The calligraphic illuminations on the margins of the manuscript, with their careful blend of colors and details, present symbolic messages that may involve religious or historical meanings. Thus, through this manuscript, we can experience not only the beauty of the art of writing and illumination, but also the spiritual and historical atmosphere surrounding the Islamic Kingdom at that time.

Thus, this manuscript is not only a historical heritage, but also an art form that is integrated with religious and cultural values. The illuminations that adorn the edges of the manuscript become windows that lead us to contemplate the beauty and complexity of the civilization of the Sultanate of Inderapura, creating a work of written art that exudes the majesty and wisdom of the Sultan in every letter and decoration.



Form of Illustration on Manuscripts in Kerinci

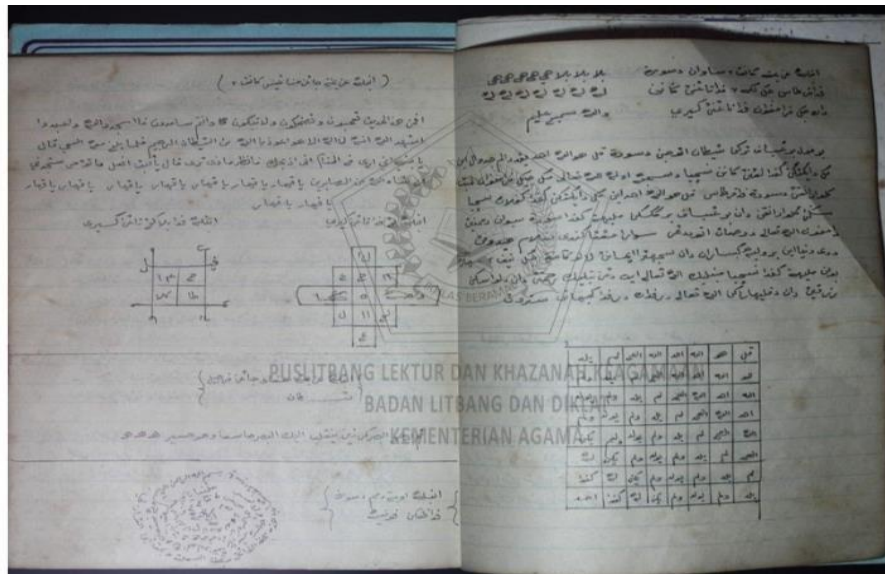


Figure 4. Manuscript of the Book of Amulets containing illustrations  
Source: Collection of Lektur, Kemenag.go.id

In further exploration of this manuscript (figure 4), there is an additional layer that provides depth of understanding regarding the use of the amulet. The illustrations or symbols presented in the manuscript are not just decorative elements, but rather summarize important meanings that complement and visually explain the ways of using the amulet conveyed in the text of the manuscript. These illustrations or symbols can be a visual guide that guides the reader in understanding the procedure or ritual of using the amulet. Each picture or symbol may hold special meanings, such as certain shapes and arrangements that reflect religious values, protection, or blessings. Therefore, this manuscript functions not only as a written medium, but also as a work of art that combines elements of text and visibility to provide a more thorough understanding of the religious practices described.

Along with the presence of these illustrations or symbols, this manuscript becomes more than just instructions for using the amulet. It becomes a window that takes us deeper into the spiritual and ritualistic dimensions of the teachings contained in this text. The illustrations may depict a particular situation or context in which the amulet is used, providing an immersive visual experience and engaging the reader holistically in the understanding of the religious practices conveyed. In this way, this manuscript becomes a harmonious unity between text and image, where both complement each other to provide a deeper understanding of the teachings and religious practices inherited in the manuscript. The illustrations or symbols are not mere decoration, but rather a key to unlocking meaning and a visual guide that enriches the reader's experience in absorbing and practicing the teachings contained in this manuscript.



## CONCLUSION

Kerinci is one of the regions located in Jambi Province, which is known for its thick implementation of customs and rich culture that has always been maintained by its people from ancient times (when the ancestors) until now. In addition to being known for the implementation of traditions that are hereditary activities of its ancestors, Kerinci also holds many ancient manuscripts which are also relics of their ancestors, where the cultural diversity contained in a manuscript found in Kerinci reflects the ability to think, human creativity, and other meanings that are trying to be conveyed through the decoration of the manuscript. The existence of ancient manuscripts containing various decorations that can later become objects of research to find out the history of human culture in the past. This ancestral culture has an invaluable value, the facts in the field show that many manuscripts found in the Kerinci area contain illuminations and illustrations with various patterns. Meanwhile, to find out the meaning behind the decorations contained in a manuscript, it is necessary to use the science of codex or codicology because it functions important for research that discusses illumination or illustration on manuscripts, which functions in finding scientific information and can get information about the material or the base of the manuscript itself. Therefore, it can be known that the illuminations and illustrations on the manuscripts in Kerinci act as decorations and explanations of the content or content of the manuscripts.

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