

Reconstructing the Evidentiary Role of the 1957 Tanjung Katung Manuscript: Documentation and Preservation of Malay Dance Heritage

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Authors' contributions

The sole author designed the study, conducted the analysis, prepared the figures, and wrote and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the 1957 *Tanjung Katung/Lagu Dua* manuscript attributed to Guru Sauti (1903–1963), the Serdang Malay choreographer, as a documentary interface between written archival evidence and embodied performance memory. Rather than reading the manuscript merely as a technical dance manual, the article asks how its material condition, internal organization, and post-independence historical setting contribute to the preservation of a performance tradition. A qualitative document-analysis design combined source criticism, descriptive codicology, heritage-oriented thematic analysis, and a qualitative preservation-risk matrix. The evidence base is the manuscript as reproduced in photographs and described in accompanying documentation; the original sheets were not examined physically. The manuscript records movement terminology, floor-path directions, musical notation, and performance rules; its reported condition includes aged lined paper, fading ink, edge damage, and lamination. The findings show that the document performs three simultaneous functions: it stabilizes otherwise embodied knowledge in written form; it reflects a mid-twentieth-century moment of cultural consolidation in which regional Malay dance was reworked for national audiences; and it now operates as a preservation object whose value depends on both physical conservation and contextual interpretation. The article proposes a layered preservation sequence that prioritizes conservation assessment, high-resolution digitization, metadata and provenance documentation, diplomatic and critical transcription, and community-informed audiovisual reconstruction with explicit evidentiary labels. The study contributes to heritage scholarship by

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demonstrating that the preservation of dance manuscripts requires coordinated care for the physical document and for the performative knowledge to which it points.

Keywords: Tanjung Katung; Guru Sauti; documentary heritage; Malay dance; manuscript preservation; intangible cultural heritage; digital preservation

1. Introduction

Performance traditions are difficult archival objects because their most significant knowledge is carried through bodies, rhythm, spatial relations, and social conventions rather than through text alone. A dance survives primarily in its execution: in the weight of a step, the timing of a turn, the etiquette that governs the distance between partners, and the stylistic nuances that practitioners recognize but rarely write down. When such knowledge is committed to paper, the resulting document occupies an ambiguous position. It is at once a durable trace of practice and an incomplete representation of it. Heritage scholarship has therefore moved away from treating heritage value as an intrinsic property of old objects and toward understanding it as a cultural process through which communities authorize, negotiate, and transmit meaning (Smith, 2006; Harrison, 2013). This shift is especially relevant to dance manuscripts: a written record can preserve traces of choreography, yet the record acquires heritage significance only through its continuing relationship with living practice.

The 1957 *Tanjung Katung/Lagu Dua* manuscript attributed to Guru Sauti provides an unusually productive case for examining this relationship. Guru Sauti (1903–1963) was born in Pantai Cermin and raised within the milieu of the Serdang Sultanate palace at Perbaungan (Purba et al., 2025). He is widely credited as the choreographer who systematized the Malay *ronggeng* repertoire into Serampang Dua Belas, a dance of twelve movement sequences that became one of the best-known Malay dances in Indonesia (Purba et al., 2025; Syauqii, 2021). Biographical reconstruction also places him within the cultural institutions of the new republic: he worked in the regional cultural service of North Sumatra, took part in an Indonesian artistic mission to Beijing in 1954, and presented Serampang Dua Belas at the State Palace during the tenth anniversary of independence in 1955 (Purba et al., 2025). A document attributed to him and dated 1957 therefore belongs not only to local performance history but also to the wider history of how regional arts were codified during the formative decade of the Indonesian nation.

The documentation on which this article draws—photographic reproductions of the manuscript accompanied by a descriptive record (hereafter “the source documentation”)—identifies the document as a handwritten record of a Malay dance tradition from the Serdang cultural area and describes it as containing movement directions, musical notation, floor pathways, and performance rules. Popular heritage descriptions characterize Tanjung Katung as a Malay couple dance, sometimes called a *lagu dua* dance, whose paired or doubled steps express the value of togetherness in Malay community life (Indonesia Kaya, n.d.); the dance also remains part of school dance instruction in North Sumatra (Manurung & Martozet, 2020). The manuscript’s reported physical condition—aged lined paper, fading black ink, minor edge tears, and protective lamination—places it squarely within the practical domain of documentary preservation. The document thus joins what Taylor (2003) distinguishes as the archive and the repertoire: durable written traces and embodied transmission are analytically different, but each helps sustain cultural memory, and neither can fully substitute for the other. Lepecki (2010) extends this insight by arguing that the dancing body is itself a kind of archive, one that re-enactment activates rather than merely retrieves.

Intangible heritage frameworks have further complicated the assumption that preservation means fixing a tradition in a single authentic form. The 2003 UNESCO Convention emphasizes safeguarding through documentation, research, transmission, and revitalization rather than through static conservation alone (UNESCO, 2003), and critical heritage scholarship shows that documentation, inventories, and lists reshape the practices

they represent (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004; Hafstein, 2009). In Indonesia, these dynamics have been intensified by the incorporation of regional arts into narratives of national ownership (Aragon, 2012; Jones, 2013). For the Tanjung Katung manuscript, these insights require a careful separation between what the 1957 record demonstrably contains, what later interpreters have attributed to it, and what contemporary performance practice has added.

Despite a growing literature on Serampang Dua Belas and on Guru Sauti's biography (Purba et al., 2025; Syauqii, 2021), the written records associated with Sauti have rarely been examined as documentary objects in their own right. Existing studies tend to use such records as sources for reconstructing the history of a dance, not as artifacts whose material vulnerability, custodial history, and representational limits require analysis. This gap matters practically as well as theoretically. A handwritten, laminated, privately held document is exposed to physical deterioration, to loss of contextual knowledge as the generation that learned directly from the choreographer passes away, and to interpretive overreach when a single text is treated as the definitive version of a living dance. Digitization is frequently proposed as a solution, yet the digital-preservation literature has long warned that digitization for access and preservation as sustained stewardship are not the same undertaking (Conway, 2010; Hedstrom, 1997).

The article therefore addresses three questions. First, what documentary characteristics and internal structures make the manuscript significant as a historical source? Second, how does the document mediate between post-independence cultural documentation and embodied performance memory? Third, what preservation strategy follows from the manuscript's physical condition and from its status as a record of intangible performance knowledge? The aim is not to authenticate every historical claim surrounding the dance, but to reconstruct the evidentiary role of the manuscript and to define a defensible, transparent preservation pathway. In doing so, the study contributes (a) an evidentiary framework that distinguishes documentary evidence from interpretive context, (b) a risk-based preservation sequence adapted to a community-held dance manuscript, and (c) a labeling scheme for reconstruction that makes uncertainty visible. Figure 1 summarizes the logic of the study.

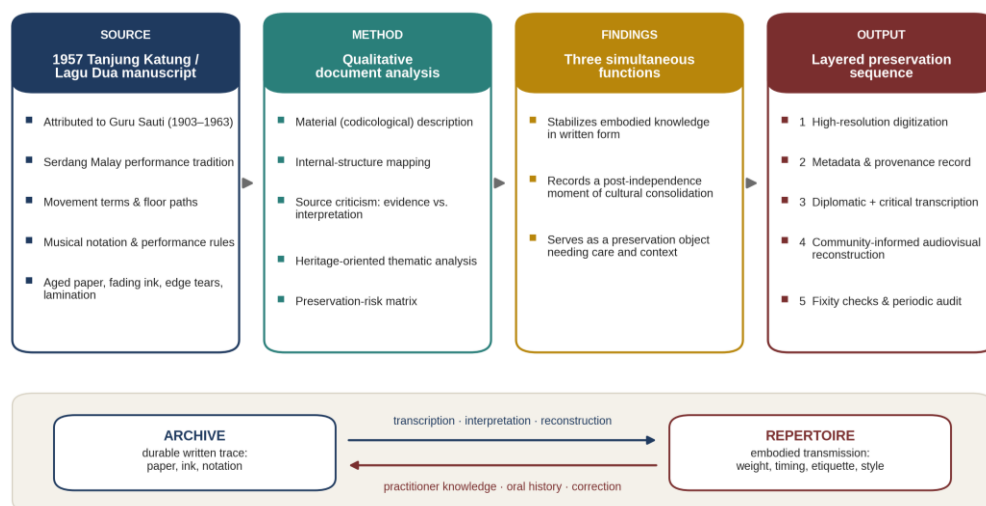


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study: from the 1957 manuscript to a layered preservation sequence linking archive and repertoire

2. Method

2.1 Research Design and Documentary Corpus

The study used a qualitative document-analysis design. The primary documentary corpus consisted of the 1957 *Tanjung Katung/Lagu Dua* manuscript attributed to Guru Sauti, as described and visually reproduced in the source documentation, together with its

descriptive and interpretive statements. The original sheets were not examined directly; all statements about material properties are therefore reported rather than observed. The manuscript remains in private custody; questions of ownership and chain of custody lie outside the scope of this article, which makes no claim about them. Secondary context was drawn from published scholarship on Guru Sauti and Serdang Malay dance (Purba et al., 2025; Syauqii, 2021), on Malay dance in the wider Malay world (Mohd Anis Md Nor, 1993), on Indonesian cultural life in the 1950s (Lindsay & Liem, 2012; Jones, 2013), and on the 1957 feature film *Tandjung Katung* (the title follows the spelling in use before the 1972 Enhanced Indonesian Spelling System) as cataloged by Kristanto (2005). These secondary materials were used to situate the manuscript, not to supply facts about its content that the manuscript itself does not support. The movement grammar of the same manuscript is examined in a separate companion study (Kurnia, n.d.); the present article is confined to the document's evidential, historical, and preservation dimensions.

A document-centered design was chosen because the research questions concern the evidentiary character of a specific artifact. Archival theory treats records not as neutral containers of information but as mediated evidence whose meaning depends on provenance, context, and subsequent custodial practices (Ketelaar, 2001; Cook, 2013). The design therefore foregrounds the relationship between the manuscript's material properties, its textual organization, and the claims that can responsibly be made about it.

2.2 Analytical Procedures

Analysis proceeded at four interrelated levels: material description, internal-structure mapping, contextual interpretation, and preservation assessment. The four levels were applied iteratively, so that observations at one level could prompt re-examination at another.

2.2.1 Material Description and Internal-Structure Mapping

Material description followed the logic of descriptive codicology, recording the reported substrate (lined paper), writing medium (black ink), script (a Latin-script hand with Malay orthographic features), legibility, visible deterioration (yellowing, fading, edge tears), and current protective treatment (lamination). Internal-structure mapping identified recurring categories of content and the way in which they are arranged on the page. Four categories were coded: movement terms, circulation lines or floor paths, musical notation or instrumental material, and performance instructions or rules. The mapping was informed by the history of dance notation, which shows that any written system for movement must choose which parameters—direction, level, duration, body part, relationship—it records and which it leaves to the reader's embodied competence (Hutchinson Guest, 2005; Van Zile, 1985; Bakka & Karoblis, 2010).

2.2.2 Source Criticism and Evidentiary Coding

Source criticism was used to distinguish documentary evidence from interpretive claims. Statements explicitly recorded or visually reproduced in the manuscript were coded as *direct documentary evidence*. Statements supplied by the source documentation or by secondary literature—such as broader historical periodization, symbolic meanings, or contemporary instrumentation—were coded as *interpretive context* unless independently demonstrated by the manuscript itself. A third code, *claim requiring further evidence*, was applied to assertions that could be neither confirmed nor refuted with the available documentation, such as statements about the manuscript's priority as the first written record of the dance or its complete chain of custody. This three-level coding follows archival approaches that insist on transparency about mediation and custody (Ketelaar, 2001; Cook, 2013) and heritage approaches that treat documentation as an active, selective practice (Harvey, 2001; Hafstein, 2009).

2.2.3 Preservation-Risk Assessment

A qualitative preservation-risk matrix was developed from the document's reported physical condition and use context. Risks were grouped into five categories: physical deterioration of paper and ink, handling exposure, contextual loss, transcription error, and performative disconnection. For each category, the likely consequence, a qualitative

priority level, a recommended action, and an expected output were specified. Priority was assigned by combining three qualitative criteria: the likelihood that the threat is already active given the reported condition; the severity and reversibility of the resulting loss; and whether the corresponding action is a precondition for later actions. A risk was rated High when the potential loss is irreversible or its mitigation is a prerequisite for subsequent steps, and Medium when the consequence can be corrected later without loss of the original evidence. Priority levels represent analytical judgments derived from the reported condition and custodial setting; they are not laboratory measurements and should be revised after examination by a paper conservator. Recommended actions were aligned with three bodies of guidance. The first comprises documentary-heritage principles that emphasize accessibility, preservation planning, and long-term stewardship (UNESCO, 2015). The second is the conservation literature on paper treatment and lamination (Zervos & Alexopoulou, 2015). The third comprises digital-preservation frameworks, including the Open Archival Information System reference model and the NDSA Levels of Digital Preservation (Lavoie, 2014; Phillips et al., 2013). Digitization was treated as an access and risk-reduction strategy rather than as a substitute for preservation of the original object (Conway, 2010; Hedstrom, 1997).

2.3 Trustworthiness and Scope

Trustworthiness was pursued through three strategies: explicit separation of evidence from interpretation; comparison of biographical and historical context across the available published sources (Purba et al., 2025; Syauqii, 2021; Lindsay & Liem, 2012; Jones, 2013); and evidential coding, in which each claim reported in Tables 1 and 2 is tagged as direct documentary evidence, interpretive context, or a claim requiring further evidence. The scope of the study is bounded by the available documentation. The analysis did not involve direct physical examination, material testing, or oral-history interviews; conclusions that depend on such evidence are therefore framed as hypotheses or recommendations rather than as findings. Because the biographical details of Guru Sauti rest principally on a single recent reconstruction (Purba et al., 2025), they are used only as context and not as evidence about the manuscript itself.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

3.1.1 Documentary Profile and Internal Organization

The source documentation describes the manuscript as several sheets of lined paper written in black ink using a Latin-script hand with Malay orthographic features. Despite yellowing, minor edge tears, and partial fading, the text is reported to remain largely legible. The document is currently preserved in laminated sheets. Its internal organization is not a continuous narrative; instead, it functions as a technical-performance record organized around movement, spatial circulation, musical materials, and rules of execution. The use of ordinary lined paper, rather than printed forms or bound registers, suggests a working document produced for teaching, rehearsal, or institutional reporting rather than a formally published manual; under the coding scheme of this study, this reading is classified as interpretive context rather than as direct documentary evidence. Table 1 summarizes the documentary profile and the analytical implications of each dimension.

Table 1. Documentary profile of the Tanjung Katung manuscript

Dimension	Documentary evidence	Analytical implication
Date and attribution	Attributed to Guru Sauti; dated 1957	Provides a fixed documentary point for studying a mid-twentieth-century codification process within Sauti's wider choreographic oeuvre.
Material form	Several sheets of lined paper; black ink; handwritten Latin script with Malay orthographic features	Indicates a practical working document rather than a formally published manual; orthography may assist dating and attribution.

Dimension	Documentary evidence	Analytical implication
Condition	Yellowing, minor edge tears, partial fading; generally legible	Creates a preservation need without implying immediate textual loss; fading ink is the most time-sensitive risk.
Current protection	Laminated sheets	Reduces handling exposure but may complicate future conservation if the laminate is non-archival or irreversible.
Content structure	Movement directions, circulation lines (floor paths), musical notation, performance rules	Shows that the manuscript records several interacting dimensions of performance—movement, space, music, and norms—rather than movement alone.

Three features of the internal organization deserve emphasis. First, the co-presence of movement terminology and floor-path directions indicates that the author was concerned not only with what dancers do but also with where they move in relation to one another—an important consideration for a couple dance whose aesthetic depends on paired and mirrored figures. Second, the inclusion of musical notation or instrumental material indicates that music was regarded as integral to the choreography rather than as an accompaniment added later. This is consistent with choreomusical scholarship on Malay dance, in which rhythmic cycles, melodic phrasing, and dance figures are closely interlocked (Mohd Anis Md Nor, 1993). The source documentation does not, however, specify the notational system (for example, cipher/number notation or staff notation) or list the instruments in full. These details should be established in the diplomatic transcription recommended below; the present argument rests only on the reported co-presence of musical and choreographic material in the same document. Third, the presence of performance rules suggests a normative intention: the text does not merely describe a performance but prescribes how the dance ought to be executed. The double title *Tanjung Katung/Lagu Dua* is itself informative, since it links a named song-dance to a rhythmic-melodic designation within Malay performance vocabulary; the precise meaning of that designation in the manuscript should, however, be verified against practitioner knowledge rather than assumed.

3.1.2 Historical Function of the 1957 Documentation

The source documentation situates the manuscript in the post-independence period, when regional arts were increasingly documented, standardized, and presented within broader narratives of Indonesian cultural identity. Independent scholarship supports the general outline of this context. The 1950s were a decade in which Indonesians debated and performed the meaning of national culture through state institutions, artistic missions abroad, radio, and film (Lindsay & Liem, 2012), and in which cultural policy began to treat regional arts as resources for nation-building (Jones, 2013). Guru Sauti was an active participant in this process: his *Serampang Dua Belas* was performed in national venues and promoted beyond North Sumatra, and he served in regional cultural institutions and as a juror in radio competitions on regional vocal traditions (Purba et al., 2025).

The year 1957 also coincides with the release of the feature film *Tandjung Katung*, directed by Jacob Harahap for Radial Film, whose cataloged synopsis concerns the creation of a national social dance drawing on regional dance traditions (Kristanto, 2005). Purba et al. (2025) associate Sauti's *Tanjung Katung* with this film. The coincidence of date and title invites comparative research into whether the manuscript was connected to the film's production, to teaching that followed its release, or to an independent documentation effort. On the available evidence, however, such a connection cannot be asserted; it remains a hypothesis that should be tested against production records, film prints, and oral testimony.

The evidentiary value of this contextualization lies less in establishing a single cause for the manuscript's production than in identifying a plausible documentary function: the transformation of specialist embodied knowledge into a transmissible written form at a

moment when Malay dance was being reworked for audiences beyond its original social setting. Heritage theory cautions that such documentation does not simply preserve a pre-existing tradition; it also selects, organizes, and authorizes particular versions of practice (Harvey, 2001; Hafstein, 2009). Table 2 sets out which interpretations the evidence permits and which claims should be avoided without further evidence.

Table 2. Evidence matrix for interpreting the manuscript's historical function

Evidence category	Observed or reported feature	Permissible interpretation	Claim to avoid without further evidence
Temporal	Document dated and attributed to 1957	A mid-century documentary intervention within the post-independence cultural context	That it was the first-ever written record of the dance
Technical	Detailed movement and pathway instructions	An effort to stabilize choreography in writing for transmission	That every contemporary version derives exclusively from this text
Musical	Instrumental parts and notational material	Music was considered integral to the documentation of the dance	That all listed instruments were used simultaneously in every performance
Contextual	Same title and year as the feature film <i>Tandjung Katung</i> (1957)	A plausible line of inquiry into links between dance documentation and national media	That the manuscript was produced for, or derived from, the film
Custodial	Private custody; lamination	The document retained continuing cultural value for its custodians	A complete, documented chain of custody unless provenance records are available

3.1.3 Preservation Priorities

The manuscript poses a twofold preservation problem. The physical sheets require documentary care, while the dance knowledge they encode requires interpretive and performative activation. Lowenthal (1998) warns that heritage preservation can create the illusion that keeping objects automatically secures the past. For performance records, preservation must instead connect the object to contextual metadata, transcription, interpretive transparency, and community knowledge. High-resolution digitization can reduce handling and widen scholarly access, but Conway (2010) emphasizes that digital surrogates introduce their own preservation obligations.

The lamination merits particular attention. Lamination can protect fragile sheets from handling damage, yet historical lamination methods have been associated with long-term problems, including adhesive ageing, discoloration, and difficulty of reversal, which is why conservation practice gives careful consideration to the reversibility and stability of any strengthening treatment (Zervos & Alexopoulou, 2015). Because the material and date of the lamination are not documented, the laminate should neither be removed nor assumed to be archival until a conservator has assessed it. Table 3 presents the resulting risk–action framework.

Table 3. Preservation risk–action framework

Risk	Consequence	Priority*	Priority action	Expected output
Paper and ink deterioration	Progressive loss of legibility, especially of faded passages	High	Condition assessment by a paper conservator; evaluation of lamination; archival housing	Baseline conservation record and treatment plan

Risk	Consequence	Priority*	Priority action	Expected output
Handling exposure	Mechanical damage to edges and folds	High	Create preservation master images and access copies; restrict handling of the original	Reduced handling of the original
Contextual loss	Future readers cannot reconstruct provenance, terminology, or purpose	High	Compile metadata, provenance note, glossary, and editorial history; record custodians' testimony	Context-rich digital record
Transcription error	Technical movement directions and notation are distorted	Medium	Diplomatic transcription plus normalized reading edition, with double-keying and expert review	Traceable critical text
Performative disconnection	Written instructions become unintelligible without embodied knowledge	High	Community-led audiovisual reconstruction with evidentiary labels (Table 4)	Linked archive–repertoire record

Note. * Priority is a qualitative analytical judgment based on the reported condition and custodial setting; Medium is assigned to transcription error because errors can be corrected against preservation master images once these exist. It should be revised after physical examination by a conservator.

The last risk in Table 3, performative disconnection, is visible in present-day practice. Figure 3 shows Tanjung Katung performed during a focus group discussion devoted to the dance as a work of Guru Sauti (1957), convened around ethnochoreology, performing-arts revitalization, and digital transformation. Such a performance is not evidence of the content of the 1957 text; it documents the living repertoire against which any manuscript-based reconstruction must be read, and it illustrates why reconstruction outputs require the evidentiary labels proposed in Table 4.

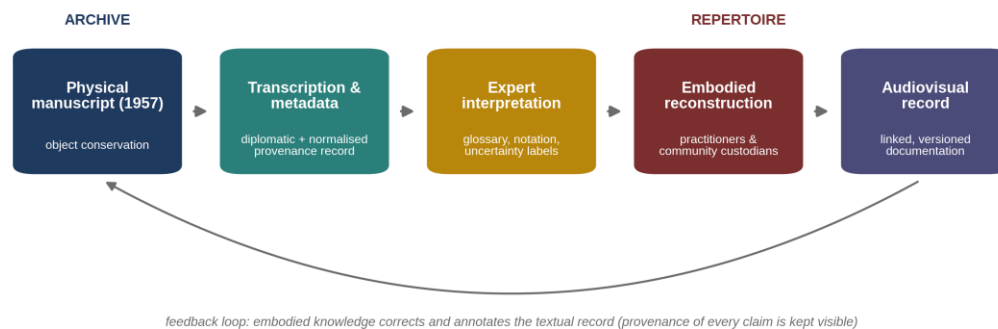


Figure 2. Archive–repertoire relationship in Tanjung Katung preservation

Source: Prepared by the author.



Figure 3. Performance of Tanjung Katung during a focus group discussion on the traditional Malay dance “Tanjung Katung” by Guru Sauti (1957), Amphi Teater, Museum Deli Serdang

Source: Author’s documentation; reproduced with the permission of the organizers and performers.

Two relationships emerge from the risk analysis. The first is the archive–repertoire relationship, in which the physical manuscript, its transcription and metadata, expert interpretation, embodied reconstruction, and audiovisual documentation form a chain whose last element feeds back into the first (Figure 2). The second is the digital-preservation cycle, in which conservation assessment, master imaging, checksum-verified redundant storage, metadata creation, access derivatives, and periodic integrity audits form a recurring rather than one-off process (Figure 4). Both relationships are consistent with the OAIS principle that preservation is an ongoing responsibility for information, its context, and its intelligibility to a designated community (Lavoie, 2014).

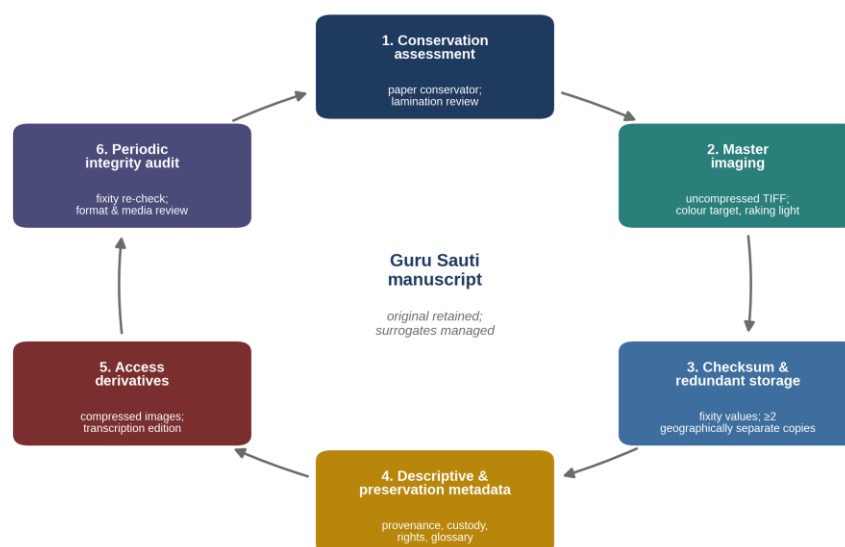


Figure 4. Cyclical digital-preservation workflow for the Guru Sauti manuscript

Source: Prepared by the author.

3.2 Discussion

3.2.1 The Manuscript as Artifact and Documentary Interface

The results support treating the manuscript as both a physical artifact and a documentary interface. Its importance does not arise simply from age. Smith's (2006) heritage-as-practice perspective helps explain why continued custodianship, scholarly interpretation, and community use are part of the manuscript's significance. Harrison (2013) similarly emphasizes that heritage is relational: materials, institutions, memories, and present-day concerns jointly produce heritage value. This relationality is particularly visible here because the manuscript's movement descriptions have limited meaning when detached from knowledge of bodily execution.

3.2.2 Key Findings

Three findings stand out. First, the manuscript *stabilizes* embodied knowledge by fixing sequence, spatial intention, musical association, and normative rules in a durable medium. Second, it *records a historical moment*: its date and authorship situate it within the post-independence consolidation of regional arts, when Serdang Malay dance was being prepared for national visibility. Third, it has *become a preservation object*: its physical vulnerability and incomplete provenance now shape its value as much as its content does. These three functions are simultaneous rather than sequential, and a preservation strategy that addresses only one of them—conserving the paper without interpreting the content, or reconstructing the dance without documenting the paper—would be incomplete.

The manuscript also demonstrates the productive tension between textual stabilization and performative variability. Taylor's (2003) distinction between archive and repertoire warns against assuming that writing can replace embodied transmission. A floor pathway or verbal instruction may preserve sequence and spatial intention, yet qualities such as weight, timing, interpersonal etiquette, and stylistic nuance remain underdetermined. This does not reduce the manuscript's value; rather, it defines the kind of evidence it is. The text should be treated as a historically situated representation of performance knowledge, not as a complete substitute for performance.

3.2.3 Comparison with Previous Studies

Previous studies of Guru Sauti have concentrated on biography and on the history of *Serampang Dua Belas* (Purba et al., 2025; Syauqii, 2021). The present study complements this work by shifting attention from the dance as a historical subject to the document as an evidentiary object. The shift aligns with debates in dance studies on re-enactment, where scholars argue that the afterlives of dances are produced through a combination of documents, bodies, and interpretive decisions rather than through recovery of a fixed original (Lepecki, 2010; Schneider, 2011; Franko, 2017). The Tanjung Katung manuscript offers a Southeast Asian case that confirms this argument while adding a distinctive feature: the written record was produced not by an outside ethnographer but by a practitioner-choreographer working within emerging national cultural institutions.

The findings also resonate with critical heritage studies of listing and inventorying. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2004) and Hafstein (2009) show that heritage regimes transform cultural practices by selecting and representing them. Consequently, a reconstructed *Tanjung Katung* performance should not be labeled simply as "the original 1957 version" unless the evidence supports that conclusion. More defensible labels include "reconstruction based primarily on the 1957 manuscript" or "interpretive reconstruction combining manuscript evidence and practitioner knowledge." Such language protects scholarly accuracy while still enabling revitalization. It also responds to Aragon's (2012) observation that Indonesian heritage claims can become instruments of national ownership that sit uneasily with practitioners' own understandings of shared, communal knowledge.

Regarding custody, the study aligns with scholarship on community archives, which demonstrates that records held outside formal institutions are often maintained through strong local commitments but face distinct risks of loss, dispersal, and limited resources

(Flinn et al., 2009). Purba et al. (2025) report that handwritten musical scores associated with Guru Sauti are held in a museum in Deli Serdang, which suggests that his written legacy may be distributed across family, community, and institutional settings. Mapping this dispersed corpus would strengthen provenance research for the Tanjung Katung manuscript and allow comparison of hand, orthography, and notational conventions across documents.

3.2.4 Implications and Applications

Preservation requires an editorial model that makes uncertainty visible. A critical edition should distinguish literal (diplomatic) transcription, normalized spelling, editorial expansion, and interpretive annotation. This is consistent with archival theory's concern with transparency about mediation and custody (Ketelaar, 2001; Cook, 2013). The same principle applies to reconstruction: where the manuscript gives a clear direction, the reconstructed sequence can be marked as document-supported; where execution depends on later oral knowledge, the source of that knowledge should be identified. Table 4 proposes a four-level labeling scheme that can be applied to both the edited text and the audiovisual reconstruction.

Table 4. Proposed evidentiary labels for the critical edition and audiovisual reconstruction

Label	Definition	Example of application
A. Document-supported	Directly stated or depicted in the 1957 manuscript	A floor path or movement term transcribed from the sheet
B. Document-inferred	Reasonably inferred from the manuscript but not explicitly stated	Counting or phrasing derived from the alignment of notation and movement terms
C. Practitioner-sourced	Supplied by identified practitioners or custodians through oral testimony	Hand position, weight, or etiquette demonstrated by a senior dancer
D. Editorial conjecture	Proposed by the editors where evidence is lacking; open to revision	Reconstruction of an illegible or damaged passage

The boundary between Labels B and D is determined by the anchor of the inference. A document-inferred element (B) is derived from information legible on the sheet, such as a count obtained by aligning a readable melodic phrase with the movement terms written beside it. An editorial conjecture (D) fills a gap for which the sheet offers no such anchor, such as the content of a faded or torn passage. Where an inference rests partly on legible and partly on illegible material, it receives the lower-certainty label (D). Labels A, C, and D correspond, respectively, to the Recorded, Attested, and Supplied tiers used in the companion ethnochoreological study (Kurnia, n.d.); Label B is added here because a critical edition must also account for readings inferred from the document itself.

Digitization is necessary but not sufficient. Hedstrom (1997) identified the long-term vulnerability of digital information, and Conway (2010) later emphasized the distinction between digitization for access and digital preservation as sustained stewardship. A preservation master should therefore be stored redundantly with fixity checks, stable metadata, and documented file formats. The NDSA Levels of Digital Preservation provide a graduated model that allows small custodians to begin with basic storage and fixity and to progress toward more robust practice as capacity grows (Phillips et al., 2013). Owens (2018) argues for practical digital preservation grounded in institutional capacity rather than technological idealism; for a privately held manuscript, a modest but redundant preservation architecture may be more sustainable than a complex system that cannot be maintained.

Finally, the 2015 UNESCO Recommendation on documentary heritage broadens the preservation rationale beyond conservation to accessibility and public memory (UNESCO, 2015). For Tanjung Katung, the strongest preservation strategy is therefore layered: conserve the object, preserve its digital surrogates, publish a critical text, record community interpretation, and maintain explicit provenance. Deegan and Tanner (2002) anticipated

this multi-stage logic in digital cultural-resource planning, where preservation, access, and interpretation must be designed together rather than sequentially. In practical terms, the approach can serve as a template for other dance and music manuscripts in North Sumatra and the wider Malay world, where comparable documents are frequently held by families, studios, and regional cultural offices.

4. Conclusion

The 1957 Tanjung Katung manuscript can be understood as a documentary interface between the written archive and embodied Malay performance knowledge. Its material form, technical organization, and continued custodianship make it valuable as a historical source, while its movement and musical contents point beyond the page to a living repertoire. The study shows that the document simultaneously stabilizes embodied knowledge, represents a mid-century documentary intervention within the post-independence cultural context of Guru Sauti's wider choreographic work, and functions today as a preservation object whose significance depends on both material care and contextual interpretation. The most defensible preservation strategy is therefore not simple digitization, but an integrated program of conservation assessment, high-resolution imaging, provenance documentation, critical transcription, and community-informed audiovisual reconstruction.

The study is limited by the available documentation. It relies on the manuscript as reproduced and described in the source documentation rather than on direct examination, and the biographical context rests principally on one recent reconstruction (Purba et al., 2025). It does not independently establish the manuscript's complete provenance, prove that it is the earliest written record of Tanjung Katung, verify its relationship to the 1957 film of the same title, or validate all historical interpretations contained in the source documentation. These questions require comparative archival research, material examination by a conservator, and systematic oral-history work. Within those limits, the manuscript provides a strong basis for a transparent preservation program and for future scholarship on Malay dance documentation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, five recommendations are offered, ordered by urgency and indicating the parties most likely to be responsible:

- (1) Immediately (custodians, with a qualified paper conservator): commission a condition assessment, including an evaluation of the lamination, before any intervention or further handling.
- (2) Immediately to short term (custodians, with a university or regional archive): produce preservation-quality master images under controlled lighting with color references, store them in at least two separate locations, and verify checksums at regular intervals.
- (3) Short term (researchers, with custodians): compile a provenance and metadata record documenting custodial history, rights, and a glossary of movement and musical terms, and agree with the custodians on the terms of digitization and online access.
- (4) Medium term (researchers and editors): prepare a critical edition that separates diplomatic transcription, normalization, and interpretation, applying the evidentiary labels in Table 4.
- (5) Medium to long term (senior practitioners of Serdang Malay dance, the regional cultural office, and researchers): undertake a community-informed audiovisual reconstruction in which each segment is labeled according to its evidentiary basis and all participants give informed consent to being recorded and published.

Future research should also locate and compare other written records attributed to Guru Sauti, including the musical scores reported in museum custody, and examine the historical relationship between the manuscript and the 1957 film *Tanjung Katung*. A comparison with preservation projects for other Southeast Asian dance and music manuscripts would further help situate the Tanjung Katung case regionally.

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