



# Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) KONINKLIJKE NEDERLANDSE AKADEMIE VAN WETENSCHAPPEN

## Provenance report regarding Handschrift (Lontar manuscript)

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2022

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Drieënhuizen, C. (2022). *Provenance report regarding Handschrift (Lontar manuscript)*. (PPROCE provenance reports; No. 45).

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## Provenance report regarding Handschrift (*Lontar* manuscript)

Caroline Drieënhuizen



Photo: Collection Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen.  
Coll.nr. RV-1994-10

Custodian	NMVW Museum Volkenkunde
Current possessor	Dutch State
Inventory number	RV-1994-10
Material/technique	Wood, lontar leaves, hemp (string), cotton (pouch)
Measurements	L: 40.5 cm W: 9.5 cm  107 sheets; damaged. 4 lines of text on each sheet. East-Javanese idiom.

### Summary of findings

This *lontar*-manuscript of the **Serat Yusup** (Chapter of Joseph<sup>1</sup>), written in the form of poem, originates from either Madura or the Madurese community in East-Java. There exist many Yusup-*lontar* as in Madurese communities young men wrote these manuscripts themselves to sing or recite them.

The *lontar* was probably already no longer in the hands of the original community when Martine ('Tine') Tonnet collected it, because of the manuscript's disorganised nature. The collecting took place at an **indeterminate time**: at least between 1893 and 1919, more probable during Tonnet's stay in Java in 1893-1904, 1908-1910 and 1915-1916.

After Tonnet's untimely death in Calcutta in 1919, a part of her collection, including this *lontar*-manuscript, was donated by her heirs to the Rijks Ethnographisch Museum (currently Museum Volkenkunde, part of Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen) in Leiden in 1920. In 1965 the manuscript was given on loan to the University Library of Leiden.

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<sup>1</sup> Meant is Prophet Joseph.

## Reconstruction provenance

[?] - [?]

In the hands of people in Madura or the Madurese community in East- Java.

*E-mail Dick van der Meij, 2 December 2021.*

### Between 1893 - 1919

Obtained by Martine ('Tine') Tonnet (1866-1919)

### August 1920

Donated by Johannes Christiaan Cornelis Tonnet (1867-1937), brother of Tine Tonnet, to the Rijks Ethnographisch Museum (currently Museum Volkenkunde, part of the Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen).

*Inventory card Museum Volkenkunde, RV-1994-10.*

### 1965 – present

Lontar on loan to the University Library of Leiden; loan extended 2020.

*Oral information received by Doris Jedamski, curator South and Southeast Asian Manuscripts and Printed Works, 8 July 2021; museum documentation Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen.*

## Introduction and context

This is a *lontar*-manuscript: a palm-leaf manuscript. Each sheet is attached to the other with a sturdy, slightly discoloured string. The manuscript is held together by two undecorated wooden boards. As a result of the manufacturing process of *lontar*-manuscripts, whereby the sheets are held over an open fire, this *lontar* has a slightly reddish-brown glow.

The manuscript is of uncertain age. It contains (a fragment of) the Serat Yusup: "Chapter of Joseph" written in a poem. In the 1960's, Dutch expert in Javanese literature Th. G. Th. Pigeaud assessed the cursive script of the *lontar* as poor, cramped, and ending abruptly. The idiom is of East-Java.<sup>2</sup> According to Indonesian literatures and manuscript-specialist Dick van der Meij, the manuscript is from a simple community of fishermen or farmers from Madura or originating from the Madurese society in East Java. In Madura, young men wrote the Yusup themselves to prove their maturity and sing or recite passages of the text.<sup>3</sup> As a consequence, large numbers of Yusup-*lontar* exists.<sup>4</sup> The *lontar* is kept in a bright yellow pouch with a lace and on the pouch are some stains.

The manuscript is incomplete and disorganised.<sup>5</sup> The leaves are not all in the right order and some are even reversed: usually, in these kinds of manuscripts the leaves are placed as in 1a-1b, 2a-2b etc., but here the leaves are regularly placed as in 1a, 1b, 2b – 2a etc. Van der Meij has no explanation for this. Remarkably, the leaves are also not all of the same size. This usually happens when the number of leaves made for a manuscript turns out to be insufficient and leaves have to be added to the original manuscript. According to Van der Meij, this hypothesis is also reinforced by the fact that the distance

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<sup>2</sup> Theodore G. Th. Pigeaud, *Literature of Java. Catalogue Raisonné of Javanese Manuscripts in the Library of the University of Leiden and Other Public Collections in The Netherlands Vol. 1. Synopsis of Javanese Literature, 900-1900 A.D.* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967),

<sup>3</sup> Dick van der Meij, *Indonesian Manuscripts from the Islands of Java, Madura, Bali and Lombok* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2017), 119.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Pigeaud, *Literature of Java*, and also according to Dick van der Meij who has studied the manuscript for a moment.

between the holes in the leaves is not the same, the string to connect both boards is new, and the fact that the two undecorated boards are too big and too crudely made.

Van der Meij therefore believes this manuscript was already not being used and preserved in the original community when Martine ('Tine') Tonnet (1866-1919) procured it. Perhaps in this period the manuscripts were already disassembled and sold in parts, with a new string to keep the leaves together and new boards at the ends. The yellow pouch is not original: it was possibly added by the salesman to make the manuscript look more interesting or important. The original community would consider the yellow pouch disrespectful towards the manuscript, according to Van der Meij.<sup>6</sup>

## Provenance report

The *lontar* was donated to the Ethnographic Museum in Leiden by colonel J.C.C. Tonnet (1867-1937) in August 1920, as part of a larger collection of manuscripts from Indonesia and India.<sup>7</sup> The collection was established by **Martine ('Tine') Tonnet (1866-1919)**, sister of J.C.C. Tonnet, and donated to the museum a year after Tine Tonnet's untimely death in Calcutta in June 1919.<sup>8</sup>

Tine Tonnet was educated as a school teacher, but developed herself into a specialist of Indian and Indonesian archaeology and of arts and crafts and became a renowned art and antiquities dealer in Calcutta, India. In Batavia in 1908, she was appointed as probably the first Dutch female museum curator at the museum of the Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen. Tonnet's career in Asia started in 1893, when she decided to travel to the Dutch colony of Indonesia to work as a governess with a Dutch coffee planter family in the vicinity of Klaten. She did not stay very long at the plantation,<sup>9</sup> but remained in Indonesia until 1903 or early 1904, where she taught in schools and developed an interest in Javanese culture and history.

In the spring of 1903, Tonnet traveled back to Holland and lived in both Haarlem and The Hague. In Leiden she started to study Sanskrit and continued studying Javanese. Between 1904 and 1907, she maintained a lively though sometimes cumbersome correspondence with several scholars on colonial Indonesia, such as the directors of the 's Rijks Ethnographisch Museum in Leiden, J. Schmeltz and H.H. Juynboll, the Director of the Koloniaal Museum in Haarlem, E.A. von Saher, archaeologist and man of letters, J.L.A. Brandes, and, J.E. Jasper, specialist on Indonesian arts and crafts.<sup>10</sup> She also exchanged letters with the founding father of the Ethical Policy, C. Th. van Deventer.

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<sup>6</sup> Email Dick van der Meij, specialist on Indonesian literatures and manuscripts, 2 December 2021.

<sup>7</sup> Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, see inv.nr. RV-1994-1.

<sup>8</sup> Letter from M. Greshoff, director of the Koloniaal Museum in Haarlem, to M. Tonnet, d.d. Haarlem, 14 October 1907. Personal archive, Eindhoven.

<sup>9</sup> Letter from A.M. Tonnet-Thiel to M. Tonnet, d.d. The Hague, 20 March 1894, Personal archive, Eindhoven, the Netherlands.

<sup>10</sup> See the correspondence archives of the Ethnographic Museum in Leiden and Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam (both part of the Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen), 302, inv.nr. 2, KITLV-archive, University Library Leiden, Leiden, the Netherlands; Personal archives, Heemstede and Aerdenhout, the Netherlands.



Martine ('Tine') Tonnet around 1900 in *sarung* and *kebaya*.  
Private collection Eindhoven, the Netherlands

Tine Tonnet appears to have been interested in manuscripts and especially in the Yusup. This particular *lontar* was not the only *lontar* of the Yusup in her collection. She collected at least six other Yusup-*lontar* from East-Java (perhaps at the same time).<sup>11</sup> She also obtained a *lontar* of Menak Amir Hamza, the Javanese version of the Hamzanama, stories on Amir Hamza, the uncle of the prophet Muhammed.<sup>12</sup> In 1909, as the curator of the museum of the Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen, she reviewed the society's collection of manuscripts and Balinese manuscripts boxes (*kropak*).<sup>13</sup> In 1909, she sent two boxes full of manuscripts to friends in the Netherlands, including three *lontar*-manuscripts of the Wirataparwa, a chapter of the Mahabharata-epic.<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps Tine Tonnet's work in Batavia had sparked her interest in those kinds of manuscripts, or possibly reflected a long standing interest. We have no archival information on when or how she collected this specific Yusup. Van der Meij points out that there is not much information available on the collecting of these kinds of manuscripts in colonial Indonesia. According to Van der Meij, there were not many original manuscripts for sale in this period.<sup>15</sup> Probably Tine Tonnet bought whatever she could, including "low quality manuscripts" like this one, according to Van der Meij. In the 1930s, manuscripts were made especially for the tourist market, but this untidy manuscript is clearly not one of these.<sup>16</sup>

Her collecting practices in later life when she settled in India, which are documented, might shed some light on her manner of acquiring objects. When she ran antique stores in Calcutta, India (sometimes working on commission), she made use of middlemen, "merchants," and "hawkers" that could visit her there and offer her their goods.<sup>17</sup> Poor people visited her there, too, selling her their valuables, such as the widow in Calcutta who sold Tonnet her napkin ring.<sup>18</sup> Occasionally, Tine Tonnet had

<sup>11</sup> These are RV-1994-11, RV-1994-14, RV-1994-17, RV-1994-19, RV-1994-20 and RV-1994-21. See: Pigeaud, *Literature of Java*, 813-814.

<sup>12</sup> See inv.nr. Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen RV-1994-22. Pigeaud, *Literature*, 814. Annabel Gallop, "Menak Amir Hamza, the Javanese version of the Hamzanama," Asian and African studies blog', <https://blogs.bl.uk/asian-and-african/2018/09/menak-amir-hamza-the-javanese-version-of-the-hamzanama.html> (accessed 17 December 2021).

<sup>13</sup> *Notulen van de algemeene en directievergaderingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen* 47 (Batavia's-Gravenhage: Kolff/Nijhoff, 1909), 29, 41. Minutes meeting d.d. 18 January 1909 and d.d. 22 February 1909.

<sup>14</sup> Letter from a certain Berta to M. Tonnet, d.d. 17 May 1909, Personal archive, Eindhoven, the Netherlands.

<sup>15</sup> Email from Dick van der Meij, 2 December 2021.

<sup>16</sup> G.W.J. Drewes, "Wat het volk leest. De grootste uitgever in Ned. Indië. Volkslectuur in 1930," *De Locomotief*, 19-12-1930.

<sup>17</sup> Letter Martine Tonnet to her sister Anna Maria Klinkenberg-Tonnet, Calcutta, 15 July 1918, Personal archive Eindhoven, the Netherlands.

<sup>18</sup> Incomplete letter from Martine Tonnet to an unknown recipient, Personal archive Aerdenhout, the Netherlands.

personal assistants, working on her behalf.<sup>19</sup> She also traveled, for instance, to collect object for trade. For instance, she went to Darjeeling in the first two months of 1913. Some of these objects were donated to the ethnographic museum in Leiden afterwards.<sup>20</sup> Tonnet also bought modern Indian miniature paintings of her friend Abanindranath Tagore (1871-1951), the founding father of modern Indian art, and exhibited them and sold his paintings to the public.

Tonnet also imported artefacts from Indonesia, mainly Java, to show to the Indian Art Circle in Calcutta and to sell.<sup>21</sup> She also collected on request. Sometimes, she even wrote the director of the ethnographic museum in Leiden asking if he already had a specific object, indicating that if he would like to have the object, she was able to buy the object in certain districts in Calcutta.<sup>22</sup> Some of the places where she could sell her artefacts were exhibitions that she organised or helped to organise: the British India Art-exhibition in Medan in 1914 and the Colonial Exhibition in Semarang in 1914, among other examples.

As mentioned above, there is no certainty about the date Tine Tonnet collected the manuscript. Perhaps the Yusup-manuscript was part of the shipment of 1906 and this was inspired by Tonnet's work in the *lontar*-collection of the Bataviaasch Genootschap, but we have no supporting evidence. We can only conclude that the manuscript was collected between 1893 and 1919, more probably during Tonnet's stay in Java in 1893-1904 and 1908-1910, 1915-1916.

In 1965, the *lontar* was given on loan to the University Library of Leiden. This loan was renewed in 2020. The *lontar* has not returned to the museum since. In the library it still has its old museum inventory number.



Martine Tonnet in later life.  
*Family archive.*

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<sup>19</sup> Letter Martine Tonnet to her mother Anna Maria Thiel, Calcutta, 10 March 1917, Personal archive Aerdenhout, the Netherlands.

<sup>20</sup> This is inventory number RV-1850-\* (Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, the Netherlands).

<sup>21</sup> Letter Martine Tonnet to H.J. Boelen, d.d. Semarang, 6 March 1917, Personal archive Aerdenhout, the Netherlands.

<sup>22</sup> Letter Martine Tonnet to museum director Hendrik H. Juynboll, d.d. Calcutta, 24 April 1913, Folder 84, Correspondence archive, Archives of the Ethnographic Museum in Leiden, the Netherlands.