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Pantun as a Medium for Islamic Appreciation in Malay Society: An Analysis of Pantun "Doa"

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Abstract

In the tradition of the Malay Muslim community, pantun is not just about the beauty of voice and language, it encompasses various aspects of community life, including cultural affairs, social relations, and Islam. To ensure that a poem is able to have an appreciative effect on the community, it depends on the challenge of public acceptance of the content of the message conveyed in the poem, this challenge touches on the structure of the poem itself, the choice of appropriate words and symbolism through environmental images. Thus, this paper attempts to analyze the relationship between the element of "allusive lines" (pembayang) and "essence lines" (maksud) in the expression of religious and spiritual values, as found in the poem. This study uses a qualitative approach by applying the method of text analysis. The main data of this study is based on the poem Doa found in the book Hati Mesra: Pantun Melayu before 1914, edited by Hans Overbeck. The results of this study show that in the rhyme of Doa there is an element of Islamic appreciation which is expressed through three main dimensions, namely faith, worship and morals. These three dimensions are successfully conveyed through the environmental elements that exist in the Malay society, which in turn is linked to the dual meanings that contain the message of Islamic teachings.

Keywords: Pantun, Doa, Islam

Introduction

The history and development of old Malay literature until today has never existed in an empty form, free of values or in a neutral form as in the idea of art for art's sake. Along with the development of Islam in the Malay realm in the Malay Islamic literary discourse, poetry plays a role as a tool to educate the community to a better one. In other languages, poetry is a field of da'wah to convey the view of nature or the worldview of Islam itself (Abror, 2011; Sung & Hussein, 2020).

One of the forms of poetry that exists in the Malay Islamic realm is pantun, according to the Dewan Dictionary, pantun is an old poem that usually consists of four lines in each stanza (the first two lines are "allusive lines" (pembayang) and the next two lines contain "essence lines" (maksud). In the Malay tradition, pantun is usually used to convey thoughts, entertainment, criticism, feelings, advice, sarcasm, values, and philosophy of a thing through a beautiful

arrangement of language. At the same time, the pantun is also conveyed through its own rhythm of voice and the allusive lines has a relationship of meaning with the essence lines of the poem. The speciality of a poem is manifested through the wisdom of the creator of the poem who tries to connect the element of the allusive lines with the essence lines to be conveyed, through elements and symbols of the environment, life experiences and even culture in the Malay realm (Sung & Hussein, 2020; Tee, 2021).

Although to create a poem, it requires specific formulas such as doubles, lines whether two, six, eight or more, have allusive lines that is related to the essence lines and also have a specific meaning based on the background of the allusive lines and there is a final rhyme at the end of each line as well as the number of syllables set for each line. But the poem itself is not just about the beauty of voice and language. The poem also covers various aspects of the life of the Malay community in particular, including cultural affairs, social relations, love and the religion of Islam itself. The poem also contains expressions that touch on the question of divinity, the question of faith, the question of worship, morality and life after death. More than that, the poem manifests the thoughts and views of the Malay community that are formed through their experiences, the history they go through and the religion they live (Abror, 2011; Yusof & Jamian, 2020).

In addition, pantun is able to attract attention through the use of images or symbols that exist in the environment such as rivers, seas, clouds, sky, trees, grass, leaves and rattan. These elements will be placed in the initial part of the pantun which acts as an allusive line and then the allusive lines connect the life experience of the Malay community with the religious message that exists in the essence lines of a poem. The relationship between the allusive lines and the essence lines is one of the important elements in the construction of the structure of a Malay pantun. This ability to connect between the allusive lines and the essence lines shows the ability of the Malay community to produce an analogy between life and tradition with the logic of the Malay community's thinking (Sung & Hussein, 2020; Tee, 2021; Khirruddin & Ahmad, 2023).

If we look at the history of the life of the Malay community, Islam has had a considerable impact and influence in the formation of the value system, thought and culture of the Malay community. The influence of Islam is also manifested in the aspects of traditional Malay literature. Among them is the pantun, which is a medium to convey religious teachings, shape and improve the life of the Malay community indirectly and casually through easy-to-understand language and also a pleasant rhythm (Abror, 2011; Ahmad & Baharudin, 2022). The poems that are sung are close to the life of the community and are full of their own aesthetic values.

Although there have been studies that discuss the relationship between Islamic values and rhyme, the in-depth study of the perspective of individual spiritual appreciation resulting from rhyme has great space and potential to be developed. Therefore, this paper tries to pay special attention to the study of the rhyme of Doa by focusing on how the elements of Islamic and spiritual values are successfully expressed through the structure of the rhyme itself, the choice of appropriate words and symbolism through environmental images. Thus, this paper attempts to analyze the relationship between the element of allusive lines and the essence lines in the expression of religious and spiritual values, as found in the rhyme of Doa. The

study of rhymes that elevate the teachings and values of Islam in rhymes should not be limited to the existence of Islamic values in general alone. This is because the embodiment of religious teachings and Islamic values expressed in a poem should be in line with the method of building the poem, the structure of the poem language, the symbolism that exists in the poem and the experience of the Malay community itself. All of these require special skills so that they are able to flick the soul of the community (Abror, 2011; Yusof & Jamian, 2020).

The motivation or driving factor behind this study stems from the need to go beyond merely identifying the existence of Islamic values in Malay pantun. More importantly, this research examines in depth how these Islamic values are conveyed to others through the relationship between the "allusive lines" (pembayang) and "essence lines" (maksud) within the pantun. While it is widely known that the pantun serves as a reflection of Malay culture and thought, a closer examination of natural imagery or symbols, language use, and structural composition in conveying religious and spiritual understanding and appreciation can further broaden society's grasp of its role in daily life. Therefore, by focusing on a pantun Doa consisting of five stanzas, this study contributes a textual analysis rooted in traditional Malay literature. This text highlights the method of interaction between "allusive lines" and "essence lines", where such interaction illustrates dimensions related to akidah and akhlak. Furthermore, this study underscores the pantun tradition in the Malay world as a form of cultural expression that enables the Islamic teachings embedded within it to leave a profound impact on individuals, particularly within the context of lived experiences and the social practices of the Malay-Muslim community.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative approach by applying the text analysis method. The main data of this study is based on the Doa poem found in the book Hati Mesra: Pantun Melayu before 1914, Edited by Hans Overbeck. published by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka in 2016. The Doa Poem consists of five poems and in the book Hati Mesra it is published on page 110. The text of the Doa poem is as follows (Overbeck, 2016):

Doa

Dahulu Allah kemudian Muhammad,
Minta doa biar selamat;
Kepada Tuhan memohon rahmat,
Barang diminta supaya beringat.

Tetak kelapa kumbang berdengung,
Tanam selasih atas keramat;
Kitab dibentang surah ditenung,
Baca fatihah doa selamat.

Orang menjala di beting timbul,
Dapat seekor bawal cermin;
Niat aku kalau kabul,
Banyak orang bertadah amin.

Tetak buluh panjang sepuluh,
Mari jolok sarang penyengat;
Angkat tangan jari sepuluh,
Doa diminta biar selamat.

Simpai rotan dari Melaka,
Buat penugal masa berjalan;
Jikalau sampai niatnya kita,
Bayar kaul puasa sebulan.

The translation of the Doa poem into English is as follows:
Prayer

First Allah, then Muhammad,
Praying for peace and safety;
Unto the Lord seeking grace and mercy,
May every wish granted keep us mindful.

Chopping the coconut while beetles hum,
Planting basil upon sacred ground;
The holy book is spread, gazing upon the verses,
Reciting Al-Fatihah, a prayer for safety.

Casting nets upon the exposed shoal,
Catching a single silver pomfret;
If my wishes are granted,
Many will raise their hands in "Ameen."

Cut ten lengths of bamboo,
To poke at the hornets' nest;
Raise all ten fingers to the heavens,
A prayer is asked so peace may be blessed.

Rattan bands brought from Malacca,
Used as a walking staff along the way;
If our vows and prayers come to pass,
A month-long fast we shall repay.

The data analysis process is carried out through a combination of three interpretive text analysis methods. The first, qualitative content analysis, the second, semiotic analysis, and the third, hermeneutic interpretation. These three analysis methods are used to identify and interpret Islamic values and the spiritual dimension that exist in a poem. Qualitative content analysis is carried out with the aim of identifying specific themes and categories of Islamic values that exist in each poem. This process will examine in depth each word, expression and message in the poem and its relation to faith, worship, Doa, sincerity, relationship with Allah and the fulfilment of vows. Meanwhile, semiotic analysis is carried out to see the use of symbols, images and symbolism found in the poem. This method is done to see the

relationship that exists between the allusive lines and the essence lines. The relationship is seen based on symbols, images and symbolism such as coconut, basil, bamboo, stinger's nest and even rattan. This analysis is able to understand the functions behind the existence of these elements to form the exact meaning when the poem conveys a religious message (Graneheim et al., 2017; Mohd. Yakin & Totu, 2014).

To understand the explicit and implicit meanings behind the text of the poem, the analysis will be carried out using the hermeneutic interpretation method. The analysis will be carried out based on the context of language, culture and also the practice of Islamic values in the Malay society. During the analysis, this approach will focus on the choice of words found in the poem, the structure of the speech of the poem, the message implied behind the poem and the spiritual values that exist that are trying to be expressed in the poem. In addition, when the analysis procedure is carried out, this method of interpretation will consider the principles of Sufism and Islamic teachings (Geanellos, 2000).

Findings and Analysis

The first stanza in the poem of Doa emphasizes the element of divinity and human dependence on Allah SWT. From the point of view of word choice, the use of the terms Allah, Muhammad, God and mercy in the first stanza makes it clear that this poem revolves around the elements of Islam and the divinity of Allah SWT Almighty. Thus, in the phrase "dahulu Allah, kemudian Muhammad" it has been shown that this poem places the position of Allah SWT as Almighty God and recognizes Allah SWT as God, while the Prophet Muhammad PBUH is his messenger. After recognizing the existence of Allah SWT, this poem also shows a form of relationship between servants and also Allah, the relationship can be seen in the expression "kepada Tuhan memohon rahmat". This expression describes the complete dependence of humans on the mercy, help and help of Allah SWT when they face all kinds of life trials. In addition, the value that should be a reminder of this poem, is clarified in the expression "barang diminta supaya beringat", this expression reminds people to always be aware of the basic purpose and all responsibilities that are carried during life and translated into Doa. Thus, through this first verse of the Doa poem, it illustrates that prayer is not just a request to obtain a wish, but more than that, prayer also shows the confession of a servant to Allah SWT, the God of the creator of nature, in order to fulfill his prayer at the same time acknowledging and recognizing the shortcomings of human beings and the limitations of humans as creatures, who certainly need to pray to their creator (Abror, 2011).

The second verse of the Doa poem has conveyed lessons related to the appreciation of worship and the practice of reading the Quran. The appreciation is embodied through the "ungkapan kitab dibentang, surah ditenun" which illustrates that the act shows the seriousness and order of a Muslim in reading the Quran not only by reading but also by examining and then appreciating the content of God's revelation. Thus, the worship of reciting the Quran is not just an oral practice but the worship requires the involvement and focus of all human potential, such as the soul and mind to seek the understanding of the meaning and true teachings in the Quran. Interestingly the phrase "baca Fatihah doa selamat" shows that this Doa poem emphasizes the position of surah Al-Fatihah as the ummul of the book which is the practice of Malay Muslims to prioritize the recitation of Al-Fatihah before asking for prayers to Allah SWT. In the part of the allusive lines, the phrase "tetak kelapa kumbang

berdengung" and the phrase "tanam selasih atas keramat" intertwine the familiarity of the traditional Malay community with the elements of the environment and plants. The allusive lines have played a role in providing a rhythm that reflects the background and environment of the Malay community which is very close to the environment which is certainly bound by divine values. Thus, the second verse in the Doa poem has highlighted the identity of the Malay Muslims who have always laid the foundation of the teachings of Islam and the prayer as an important practice for daily life (Ahmad & Baharudin, 2022; Abror, 2011).

In the third stanza, the main choice of words in this Doa poem is the words "niat" and "kabul". These two words show a spiritual element that is closely related to prayer, which is the earnest effort of asking from a servant to God who created the servant. In addition, there is a value of sincerity in the intention through the expression "niat aku kalau kabul" which illustrates that the person who asks for the prayer is truly asking for a prayer from the bottom of his heart and together with the prayer, he really hopes that the prayer will be approved and accepted by Allah SWT. Furthermore, from the act of prayer of an individual, "banyak orang bertadah amin" has shown that the practice of prayer is not only done individually, but in the tradition of the Malay Muslim community, the practice of prayer is also done en masse and together with the community in one ceremony. Therefore, the involvement of the public in reciting a prayer has shown that the practice of prayer is not personal but community in nature which certainly strengthens the social relationship between one Muslim individual and another Muslim individual. In this Doa poem, the relationship between the allusive lines and the essence lines is manifested through the activity of fishing and obtaining mirror pom-pom, where the allusive lines has reflected the life and traditions of the Malay Muslim community with religious messages (Abror, 2011; Yusof & Jamian, 2020).

In the fourth stanza, the rhyme of Doa has chosen the symbolism with the expression “angkat tangan jari sepuluh”. This act of raising the hand depicts the procedure and method for a Muslim to pray, which has been a practice in the Malay society for generations. This act of raising one's hands is a symbol of one's humility, the humility of one who asks compared to the height of the Most High, namely Allah SWT, which is the hope of the one who asks. This symbol of humility shows how limited human ability is, at the same time man must ask Allah the Most High. While the phrase “doa diminta biar selamat” in this fourth stanza shows that the life of a Malay Muslim must always ask for protection, where the request is leaned on Allah SWT, so that he is always protected from any form of danger and unwanted things. The value contained in the essence lines of the rhyme is linked to the expression of the allusive lines of the rhyme through the phrase "Mari jolok nest penyeng" which implies that the act of jolok nest sting is high risk and dangerous, capable of easily injuring humans. Thus, the appreciation of Islam that results from this rhyme is the emergence of the value of the slave and the belief that Allah SWT is the source that provides perfect protection for mankind (Abror, 2011).

Summary

In the Doa poem, there is an element of Islamic appreciation which is expressed through three main dimensions, namely faith, worship and morality. The dimension of faith is highlighted through the recognition and recognition of the power of Allah SWT, so that the human being depends on Allah in any situation. While the dimension of worship is expressed through the practice of reading the Quran, praying, asking for salvation from Allah SWT. Furthermore, the

dimension of morality is expressed through community life. In addition, the Doa poem has used environmental elements that exist in the Malay society, associated with the essence lines that contain the message of Islamic teachings. Thus, this Doa poem does not function only as a traditional entertainment tool in the Malay society, more than that, the Doa poem serves as a platform for education and the delivery of Islamic values to the Malay community.

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