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Aesthetic Reception of the Chants of Praise to the Prophet Muhammad in the Tradition of Reciting the Book of Al-Barzanji in Lombok

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Abstract

This research discusses the aesthetic reception of the chanting of praise to the Prophet Muhammad in the tradition of reading the Al-Barzanji book in Mekebat Hamlet, Prai Meke Village, Central Lombok. The tradition of reciting the Al-Barzanji book has become part of the religious and cultural rituals of the local community, which is carried out at various events such as the commemoration of the Prophet's birthday, weddings, aqiqah, and other thanksgiving. This research uses a qualitative approach with observation, interview, and text analysis methods based on Wolfgang Iser's aesthetic reception theory. The results show that the recitation of Al-Barzanji is not just a ritual, but also has spiritual and social values for the community. This recitation serves as a means of strengthening love for the Prophet, strengthening ukhuwah Islamiyah, and becoming a medium for transferring Islamic values to the younger generation. However, there is also a perception that this tradition has a sacred aspect that makes it seem mandatory in every celebration. This research provides insight into how religious traditions can shape a community's cultural and religious identity as well as the challenges of maintaining the purity of faith amidst evolving cultural practices.

Keywords: Aesthetic reception, Al-Barzanji, praise, religious tradition, Lombok

BACKGROUND

Every fall on the 12th of Rabiul Awal Muslims always celebrate the arrival of the maulid of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. Thus it is nothing but a cultural heritage or Islamic civilization that is commemorated from generation to generation by its people. If examined from historical records (tarekh), maulid has been started since the time of the Fatimid Caliphate under the leadership of the descendants of Fatimah az-Zahrah bint Muhammad. The origin of the maulid celebration was carried out on the proposal of a warlord named Saladin al-Ayyubi (1137M-1193), to the caliph to hold a commemoration of the birthday (mulud) of the Prophet Muhammad. The ending of the commemoration was to restore the fighting spirit of Muslims in the struggle to liberate the al-Aqsa Mosque in Palestine from the clutches of the Jewish Zionists. Which then, produced a great effect in the form of the spirit of jihad of Muslims at that time. Substantially it can be said that the celebration of the prophet's maulid is a form of effort to recognize the exemplary of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. for the apostolic treatise to broadcast Dinul Islam.²

It cannot be denied that in the records throughout the history of life, the Prophet Muhammad SAW. is a great leader who is very extraordinary in providing a great example for his people. In this context, maulid should also be articulated as one of the efforts of self-transformation of Muslim piety. That is, as a new *spirit* to build prophetic values in order to create a *civil society* which is part of democratization such as tolerance (*tasamuh*), transparency (*tabligh*), non-violence, gender equality, love for the environment, pluralism, social justice, free space for participation, and humanism. In the anthropological sociological historical order of Islam, the Prophet Muhammad can be seen and understood in two different social

¹ Wasisto Raharjo Jati, Tradition, Sunnah and Bid'ah, *Analysis of Barzanji in the Perspective of Cultural Studies*, Department of Politics and Government, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences UGM (Vol.14 No.2 Year 2012), p.1.

 $^{^2\,}$ https://www.suara.com/news/2020/10/28/143433/sejarah-maulid-nabi-muhammad-saw. accessed on February 12, 2021.

dimensions and complement each other.³

The first dimension, can be seen and understood from an Islamic sociopolitical perspective (siasyah syariah), that the Prophet Muhammad SAW. in
addition to being a prophet and apostle as well as imamul ummah from here
he is an accomplished and reliable politician. His individual figure is very
identical to the figure of a leader who is fair, egalitarian, tolerant, humanist,
and non-discriminatory and hegemonic, which is then able to bring the social
community order of the Arab nation at that time towards a social community
order that is prosperous, peaceful and serene under the forgiveness of Rabb
(baldatun thoibatun warabun ghaffur).4

The second dimension, can be seen and understood from a theological-religious perspective, that the Prophet Muhammad SAW. as a prophet and also as an apostle akhiruzaman in the order of the Islamic concept. He is positioned as a sacred human figure who is God's representative in the world whose main mission is to carry, convey, and apply all forms of holy messages from God to humanity universally.

On this occasion it seems that the time has come for Muslims to re-start (reconstruct) understanding the meaning of the 12th of Rabiul Awal which is often called maulid more deeply and fundamentally, so as not only to understand and commemorate it as the birthday of the figure of the last prophet and apostle who is loaded with a series of sacralistic-symbolic Islamic rituals alone, but far from that it actually makes it the birth of a leader who brings the spirit of reform and restoration towards change at the level of leadership in general and judicial leadership in particular in order to achieve a great judiciary. Because it is no secret that currently this nation is in need of a leader who is able to reconstruct an image of leadership and social society that is ideal, egalitarian, tolerant, humanist and non-discriminatory, as has been practiced and carried out by the Prophet Muhammad SAW. for all mankind (rahmatan linnas). So that the contextualization of maulid is no longer understood from an Islamic perspective alone, but must also be

³ <u>Seehttp://azharjaafar.blogspot.com/</u> (Nukilan Thabarani - Majma'uz-Zawa'id 8:275)

⁴ Bahrum Rangkuti. *Prophet Muhammad - Leadership*, Jakarta: Student Library, 2010.

understood from various perspectives and dimensions concerning all issues in the life of mankind, such as aspects of law enforcement, politics, social, cultural, educational, economic, and religious issues.⁵

One of the traditions that developed in the Indonesian Muslim community and in other Islamic countries after the death of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. is the tradition of celebrating the maulid of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. which is coupled with the reading of the book al-Barzanji. Based on history in Islamic literature, the spread of maulid Barzanji was spread by the Sayyids, a group of Arabs from Yemen who were very influential in the process of the arrival of the Islamic mission and they are the ones who color various ritual models in Indonesia.⁶

In its development, the reading of the al-Barzanji book does not only stop at its function as reading material, especially during the maulid celebration, but with all its potential and existence, this work seems to be very imprinted, passed down from generation to generation so that it is formed into a religious tradition, a cultural ritual tradition in the NTB community, especially in Central Lombok Regency Mekebat Hamlet, Prai Meke Village. Basically, there is nothing wrong in the tradition of reading the book of al-Barzanji if you are able to take ibrah in the implementation of the tradition, it's just that because of some beliefs in the lives of people in Central Lombok Regency Mekebat Hamlet Prai Meke Village. That the implementation of this Barzanji tradition has its own sacred values to be maintained and maintained, so that a perception arises that it is not afdhol and perfect for an event or hajat without Barzanji being carried out, even a perception arises that if it is not done, something unwanted will happen, as if this Barzanji is used as an obstacle when you want to do something so that it becomes mandatory. If we look at the essence and purpose of the recitation of Barzanji, it will certainly

⁵ <u>See</u> http://www.republika.co.id/berita/dunia-islam/khazanah/12/01/20/ly3qil-muhammad-saw-pemimpin-militer-teragung.

⁶ Anna Rahma Syam et al, *Barzanji Tradition in Bone Regency Community Perception*, Journal of Islamic Discourse (Volume 04 Number 2, August 2016), p.1

endanger the existence of Islamic faith if it is allowed to grow, but some others see it as not endangering people's beliefs, but rather classified as a culture with Islamic nuances.⁷

In general, the tradition of reading the al-Barzanji book with other regions is not much different from the Al-Barzanji reading model in the Lombok community. Where in the procession of reading the book of Al-Barzanji there are several surahs and verses of the Qur'an that are read in it, namely surah Yasiin, surah al-Ikhlas, al-Falaq, an-Nash, al-Fatihah, surah al-Bagarah verses 1-5 and verse 255. Then followed by dhikr and prayer. The entire verses of the Qur'an are read once except surah al-Ikhlas which is read 70 times. The reading of the al-Barzanji model like this is something that is commonly done by other communities in the Lombok area. However, in certain communities there is a practice of reading the book of Al-Barzanji with another model, namely precisely in Prai Meke Village, Central Praya Sub-District, Central Lombok Regency, NTB where the tradition of reading the book of Al-Barzanji in the village, after completing the reading of Surah Yasin (which is part of the arrangement of the reading of the Book of Al-Barzanji in general) then continued with the reading of the verses listed in the book by the reader's officers with a melodious voice (tilawatil art). The tradition of reading the book of Al-Barzanji like this is certainly very rarely done by the people of Lombok in general. In addition, some other people consider that the tradition is not 'ethical' when someone dies.

Therefore, the description of this phenomenon makes researchers interested in studying it more deeply, especially from the aspects of meaning and appreciation (aesthetic reception). There are several reasons that became the background of this research. *First, the* recitation of the book of Al-Barzanji twice a week on Monday and Friday which is usually carried out on Friday and when there is a celebration or salvation of buildings and houses where people live is a common tradition, but not a few people know the history, basics and objectives, especially young people or students. *Second,* another problem that also arises among some people in Central Lombok

 $^{^{7}}$ ibid.p.

Regency, especially Mekebat Hamlet, Prai Meke Village, is that they only carry out the tradition without knowing, understanding the contents and meaning of the book. Whereas in the book there are so many lessons that can be learned which will later become guidelines in the life of Muslims. Based on the description above, the researcher is interested in studying more deeply related to how the history and practice of reading the book of al-barzanji and how the aesthetic reception of the chanting of praise to the prophet PBUH in the tradition of reading the book of al-barzanji in Mekebat Hamlet, Prai Meke Village.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To understand how the aesthetic reception of the people of Mekebat Hamlet, Prai Meke Village towards the recitation of al-Barzanji, this study will try to use Wolfgang Iser's theory of aesthetic response. The theory of aesthetic response is one branch of the theory of literary criticism that focuses its study on the reader. A text, including kitab al-Barzanji only has meaning when it is read by the *reader*. For this reason, reading is the main requirement of an interpretation process.

The center of the object of reading of a literary study is the interaction between the structure inherent in the text and the reception or response to the text. From this format of reading, it will be seen how the dynamism of interpretation of a text. A *reader* receives the message of the text by restructuring it first through a series of readings, then in a series of reading processes a *common code* emerges (the reader's general understanding of the text that does not tend to the objectivity of the text or the subjectivity of the reader). Based on this assumption, a researcher first examines the structure of the text. It is this structure that serves to influence the reader to interpret a text and the response of the reader.

Every text that is created is always addressed to a specific reader

⁸ The theory of aesthetic response is a theory that focuses on the dialectical relationship between the reader and the text. See Walfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, (Baltimore: The Jhon Hopkins University Press, 1980).

(intended reader), this reader is the main target of the text. In addition to the intended reader, there is also a type of reader who is not the main purpose of the text, but he also reads and accepts the presence of the text. This reader can come from any background, this type of reader is called the implied reader. In the process of interaction between the reader and the text, the implied reader has the same role as the intended reader as textual structure and structured act. In the interaction pattern between the reader and the text-textual structure-is represented by the linguistic structure of the text itself. While the structured act is the reader's behavior or response to the text that has been predicted by the author through the text structure. When the reader is an implied reader, the reader's behavior or response to the text will be influenced by his subjectivity, scientific background and spiritual environment.

In the process of interaction between the text and the reader, these two aspects interact dialectically. Each of them plays a very influential role in the effort to produce meaning. The *implied reader* with his/her various perspectives to read the text then re-structures it according to his/her imagination. The new text structure is owned in the *implied reader*'s mind and then leads the *implied reader* to meaning. The understanding of the meaning obtained by the *implied reader* encourages it to actualize it in the form of behavior (act), as for this form of actualization can be material or even spiritual.

With regard to the object of this research, in my opinion, this aesthetic reception theory is very suitable for the object of research on the Aesthetic Reception of the chanting of praise to the Prophet SAW in the tradition of reading the al-Barzanji book in Lombok, more specifically in Prai Meke Village, Central Lombok. With the hope that this aesthetic reception theory can make it easier for researchers to understand the meaning contained in the practice of reading al-Barzanji.

THE HISTORY AND PRACTICE OF RECITING AL-BARZANJI

The Book of Maulid al-Barzanji is one of the most popular and most

⁹ Imas Lu'ul Jannah quoted from Wolfgang Iser, p. 22

widely distributed maulid books in Islam. Its content is a summary of the Prophetic Sirah which includes the story of his birth, his sending as an apostle, hijrah, akhlaq, warfare until his death. In a very poetic language, at the beginning of the book, the birth of Muhammad SAW is marked by many miraculous events such as the calm wind blowing, animals that suddenly fell silent and plants that bowed their leaves as a sign of respect for his presence. It is also said that Muhammad was born bowing to Allah and at the same time the palaces of the wicked were shaken. King Kisra's palace was cracked, fourteen of its porches falling to the ground. Likewise, the fire worshipped by the king of Persia, which had not been extinguished for thousands of years, was suddenly extinguished when the Prophet was born. The Book of Maulid Al-barzanji also tells the story of Prophet Muhammad's noble character and political skills beautifully. At the age of thirty-five, the Prophet was able to reconcile the disputing tribes over the placement of the Hajar Aswad stone in the Kaaba which symbolized the spirituality of the tribes in Arabia at that time. When each tribe felt most entitled to determine the place of Hajar Aswad, the Prophet appeared by asking each tribe to hold each end of the turban which was used as a means to place Hajar Aswad in its place. ¹⁰

The use of poetic language in the narration of the prophet's history creates a mystical atmosphere and awakens the spiritual spirit of the reader. For readers who understand fushah Arabic, it is clear that the author is deeply fascinated by the moral majesty of Muhammad. So much so that the author refers to Muhammad through cosmic language greetings such as "O Thou Sun, O Thou Moon, O Thou Light upon Light and so on". In short, Al-Barzanji's work is not just a reference work, but a collection of evocative words.¹¹

The history of the zanji tradition, which essentially praises the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), is a tradition that is as old as Islam itself because this tradition existed when he was still alive. This tradition was introduced by

https://www.kompasiana.com/chozin/54f7bd30a33311be208b47dc/maulid-nabi-kitab-al-barzanji-dan-sejarah-perlawanan-nonsenjata-ummat-islam_Accessed February 22, 2020

¹¹ *Ibid*.

three official poets of the Prophet Muhammad, namely Hasan Ibn Tsabit, Abdullah Ibn Rawahah, and Ka'ab Ibn Malik. It is narrated by Ibrahim al Bajuri in Hasyiyat al Bajuri 'ala Matn Qasidah Al Burdah that this tradition of praising the Prophet is a tradition that needs to be encouraged and preserved by his people to always obey Allah and His Messenger. ¹²

Al-Barzanji is a book by "Sheikh Ja'far bin Husain bin Abdul Karim al-Barzanji". He was born in Medina in 1690 AD, and died in 1766 AD. Barzanji comes from the name of a region in Kurdistan Barzinj. Actually, the book is titled 'Iqd al-jawahir (jeweled necklace), but later it became more famous as al-barzanji. The book, tells the history of the Prophet Muhammad which includes his genealogy, life journey during childhood, adolescence, adulthood until he was appointed as the Apostle. In addition, it also mentions the nature of the Apostle, the privileges and various events that can be used as examples for mankind. With high language and literature makes this book a pleasure to read. In Indonesia, barzanji is a popular book among Muslims, especially in Java. It is required reading at barjanjen or diba' events, which are regular events for some Muslims in Indonesia. 13

This book was written with the aim of awakening the spirit of Islam and for the love of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. as well as for Muslims to imitate his personality, imitate his traits, behavior and morals. ¹⁴ The historicity of the birth of this book is inseparable from the great momentum regarding the commemoration of the maulid of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. or the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. During the reign of Salahuddin al-Ayyubi, which was originally commemorated to raise the spirit of Muslims who lost the spirit of struggle and brotherhood ukhuwah. Because at that time Muslims were struggling to defend themselves from the attacks of

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https://www.nu.or.id/post/read/36619/melestarikan-tradisi-barzanji Accessed February 22, 2020

¹⁴ Anna Rahma Syam et al, *Barzanji Tradition in Bone Regency Community Perception*, Journal of Islamic Discourse (Volume 04 Number 2, August 2016), p.251

European crusaders, namely from France, Germany and England. This is known as the Crusade. One of the activities initiated by Sultan Salahuddin on the anniversary of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday. The first time was to organize a competition to write the history of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH. along with praise for the Prophet Muhammad PBUH. with the most beautiful language possible. All scholars and writers were invited to take part in the competition. The first winner was Sheikh Ja'far Al-Barzanji. It turns out that the commemoration of the Maulid of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. Which was organized by Sultan Salahuddin it produced positive results. The spirit of the Muslims to face the Crusades rallied again. Salahuddin managed to gather strength, so that in 1187 / 583 H. Jerusalem was captured by Salahuddin from the hands of the Europeans, and the Aqsa Mosque returned, to this day. The book of Barzanji until now has spread throughout the Arab and Islamic countries both in the East and in the West which is not only read by the commemoration of the maulid of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, but in every religious ritual and cultural ritual in people's lives. 15

A. RESEARCH METHODS

Qualitative research on how the history and practice of reading the book of al-barzanji and how the aesthetic reception of the chanting of praise to the prophet SAW in the tradition of reading the book of al-barzanji in Mekebat Hamlet, Prai Meke Village. The informants in this study consisted of key informants of the Head of Prai Meke Village, Head of RT and Hamlet Head (KADUS), Chairman of the Al-Barzanji reading group and the main informants of the Mekebat Hamlet community of Prai Meke Village. With data collection techniques through observation to the research location, then conducting in-depth interviews with the community, and coupled with some archives or documentation of the results of previous research. To measure the validity of the data by processing data from the findings in the field not only on a single source then draw conclusions. Data analysis in this study uses data analysis techniques developed by Miles Huberman, namely first collecting data from interviews, observations, and various archives or documentation.

¹⁵ Ibid.p.252.

Then sharpen, classify, direct, reduce then present data and draw conclusions.¹⁶

RESEARCH RESULTS

One of the traditions of the people of Mekebat Hamlet, Prai Meke Village, Central Lombok Regency that has survived to this day is the reading of the book al Barzanji in various cycles of life. For the people of Prai Meke Village, the term Barzanji is better known by using the word besentulak (read al Barzanji). Besentulak is a form of word that is often used by the people of Mekebat Hamlet, Prai Meke Village and throughout Lombok NTB which means reading the book of al Barzanji on every Friday and Monday night, community desires, which contains the life history of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, salawat and prayers, which are read together and alternately led by an imam or an uztaz.

Generally, the community in Central Lombok Regency, especially in Mekabat Hamlet, Prai Meke Village, in every hajat is always coupled with the reading of the al-Barzanji book, as revealed by one of the informants, stating that:

"All forms of religious activities are always coupled with the recitation of Barzanji. Such as aqiqah, moving into a new house, bridal, or other thanksgiving. Because one of the beliefs of the people of Lombok, especially Prai Meke Village, is that all good religious activities bring blessings. Therefore, every wish of the community is always coupled with the recitation of Barzanji which aims to make their wishes blessed by Allah swt."¹⁷

In line with the following statement from one of the people of Prai Meke Village:

"Yes, if there is a celebration such as aqiqah, moving into a new house, bride and groom, then on Friday nights

¹⁶ Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2013). Qualitative data analysis. Sage

¹⁷ Mr. Moeh Salehudin S.Pd, Head of Prai Meke Village, Interview.

and certain nights the community usually reads the book of al-barzanji because we found it when we were small, alhmdulillah until now."¹⁸

Based on the above, the people of Mekebat Hamlet, Prai Meke Village read Barzanji in every religious ritual and cultural ritual such as, the mauled event of the Prophet Muhammad SAW., weddings, aqiqah, isra' miraj, building a house, occupying a new house, reviving Friday night, going on Hajj or Umrah, circumcision, or other hajat or thanksgiving. The reading of Barzanji has become part of the customs of the Mekebat Hamlet Community of Prai Meke Village, because this has become a habit of the Mekebat Hamlet Community of Prai Meke Village, so that if the reading of Barzanji is not carried out, it feels that something is missing in the event, it can be said that the community's hajat is not perfect if Barzanji is not carried out. Based on information obtained from several informants in the field, there are several reasons and purposes for the people of Prai Meke Village to carry out or combine the reading of Barzanji in every religious and cultural ritual, including the following:

a. Mr. Ahmad.S.Ag., M.Pd, said:

The barzanji tradition can be said to be a sunnah worship in the perspective of cultural studies because there are various reasons behind it, for example. Increasing the spirit of love and practicing the value of piety to the Prophet Muhammad SAW as uswatun hasanah which is exemplary by today's society. In this case, there is a transfer of noble values that can be taken from the figure of the Prophet himself to be practiced in everyday life.¹⁹

b. Ust. Sabar, said:

¹⁸ Heri Fathurrozi, Head of Hamlet, Interview

¹⁹ Mr. Ahmad Head of MTS Religious Figure, Interview.

The barzanji tradition can be said to be a sunnah worship in the perspective of cultural studies because there are various reasons behind it, for example, strengthening ukhuwah islamiyah among Muslims because the bazanji performance itself always involves many people and the masses see it too much so that in addition to getting educational value from reading the barzanji tradition and increasing interaction between fellow communities.²⁰

c. L. Muhammad Juanda, said:

The barzanji tradition can be said to be a sunnah worship in the perspective of cultural studies because there are various reasons behind it, increasing certain worship practices for individuals who always read barzanji in every spare time because barzanji directly leads a person to practice one of the points in the pillars of faith, namely the Messengers and Prophets of God. ²¹

Based on the description above, the author sees that the understanding of the community in Mekebat Hamlet, Prai Meke Village related to the framework of reading Barzanji in every hajat, is interpreted as one of the forums in broadcasting Islam, because on this occasion many people gather, so that by reading Barzanji which contains the life history of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. the community can recall and increase love for the Prophet Muhammad SAW. which of course is followed by obedience to His teachings, and on this occasion it is also very good to introduce to the younger generation about the Prophet Muhammad SAW, who is a figure who plays a very important role and is a role model in carrying out the teachings of Islam.

CLOSIN

Based on the explanation above, the result of the conclusion that the Aesthetic Reception of the chanting of praise to the Prophet SAW in the tradition of reading the al-Barzanji book in Lombok, Mekebat Hamlet, Prai Meke Village, Central Lombok. In its development, the reading of the Barzanji book does not only stop at its function as reading material, especially

²⁰ Ust.Sabar Takmir Masjid,

²¹ L. Muhammad Juanda, Jamaah Barzanji.

during the maulid celebration, every religious ritual and cultural ritual such as, the maulid event of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. weddings, aqiqah, isra' mi'raj, building a house, occupying a new house, reviving Friday night, hajj or umrah, circumcision, and other hajat or thanksgiving. The reading of Barzanji has become part of the customs of the Mekebat Hamlet Community of Prai Meke Village, because this has become a habit of the Mekebat Hamlet Community of Prai Meke Village, so that if the reading of Barzanji is not done, it feels that something is missing in the event, it can be said that the community's hajat is not perfect if Barzanji is not carried out. But with all its potential and existence, this work seems to be very imprinted, passed down from generation to generation so that it is formed into a religious tradition, a cultural ritual tradition especially in the NTB community, especially in Central Lombok Regency Mekebat Hamlet, Prai Meke Village. Basically, there is nothing wrong in the tradition of reading the book of al-Barzanji if you are able to take ibrah in the implementation of the tradition, it's just that because of some beliefs in the lives of people in Central Lombok Regency Mekebat Hamlet Prai Meke Village. That the implementation of this Barzanji tradition has its own sacred values to be maintained and maintained, so that a perception arises that it is not afdhol and perfect for an event or hajat without Barzanji being carried out, even a perception arises that if it is not done, something unwanted will happen, as if this Barzanji is used as an obstacle when you want to do something so that it becomes mandatory. If we look at the essence and purpose of the recitation of Barzanji, it will certainly endanger the existence of Islamic faith if it is allowed to grow, but some others see it as not endangering people's beliefs, but rather classified as a culture with Islamic nuances.

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