



Arabic Literature in Southeast Asia: Case Study in Indonesia

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Article Information:

Received : 07-05-2023
Revised : 20-05-2023
Accepted : 25-06-2023

Keywords:

*Indonesian, literary influences,
Malay, regional Arabic literature*

Abstract: This article aims to: (1) find out the entry of Arabic literature in Indonesia; (2) describe the types of Arabic literature in Indonesia; (3) describe literary figures in Indonesia; (4) the influence of Arabic literature in Indonesia. The writing is collected by conducting a library search, searching for relevant sources, and searching for data through the internet. The data and information used are books, journals, theses, electronic media, and several relevant libraries. The results of this paper indicate that (1) Arabic literature is estimated to have entered Indonesia in the 18th century AD through Arab traders, but some argue that Arabic literature came along with the entry of Islam into Indonesia; (2) the types of Arabic literature that exist in Indonesia are poetry, old and new prose, as well as translations; (3) in Indonesia, there are literary figures such as Halimi Zuhdy and translator figures such as Ali Audah; (4) while Arabic literature contributes significantly to Indonesian and Malay literature.

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How to cite:

Balkis Nur Azizah "Arabic Literature in Southeast Asia: Case Study in Indonesia," *Kitabina Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra Arab*, Vol. 4 No. 01 (2023): 38-46

Introduction

Speaking of Arabic literature, it will not be separated from Islam, the development and emergence of Islam itself. While peeling literature will not be able to get out of the discussion of culture. Because from that culture will emerge a belief, knowledge, and behavior in society. So it can be concluded that literature is part of the culture, while all cultures cannot be said to be literature.

During the Jahiliyah era, Arabic literature was already among the people at that time. This can be seen from the study of the periodization of Arabic literature which began in the pre-Islamic period to the modern era. This period can be called the period of literary interaction in everyday life in terms of trade. This interaction tradition is the habits and customs of the Arabs to literature that has made Islam more widespread in the Middle East. The rapid development of literature is alleged because Arabic literature does not limit itself to the repetition of beautiful words or is limited to text alone, but Arabic literature extends to humanitarian issues with its aspects.

The expansion and development of Arabic literature are also caused from time to time in various parts of the world. But in each country, the literary form is different and becomes a new variant of writing literary works. This occurs in the Southeast Asian region, where some of the works and writers can be influenced by Arabic literature or even the language assimilation occurs from some of the vocabularies in that country.

In the Southeast Asian region, there are several forms of works and writers who are famous for their role in Arabic literature. The writers are famous for

their works with very diverse genres. One of the most famous writers in Southeast Asia, Hamzah Fansuri, is famous for his religious genre poetry, he is a writer and tassawuf expert from Indonesia who lived in the early 16th century AD. Literature in several countries in the Southeast Asian region is strongly influenced by Arabic. However, it is necessary to prove valid whether literature in Southeast Asia is heavily influenced by Arabic literature.

Methods

Researchers found the data used for writing is data obtained from a descriptive literature review. The literature review here is to conduct a study with valid sources in the form of books, articles, journals, and from websites related to the discussion. While this descriptive data is data that is generated by describing and implementing a problem being studied. And the techniques used by the researcher in finding the data obtained are: (1) the researcher conducts a literature review first from the valid sources obtained; (2) the researcher reads repeatedly to find data relevant to the discussion; and (3) the researcher analyzes and records the data relevant to the discussion after that and puts it into this research paper.

Results and Discussion

Literature occupies an important position in Islamic civilization. The development of Arabic literature played an important role in Islamic literature because Arabic is the sacred language of Islam and the Koran. Arabic in its classical form can meet the needs of religion, literature, art, and other formal forms. Arabic literature, or another name Al-Adab Al-Arabi, appears in the

form of prose, fiction, drama, and poetry. Arabic literature began to develop around the 6th century AD, perhaps because Arab society was still in the Jahiliyyah civilization. However, at that time, some form of written literature was discovered.¹

The Entry of Islam into Indonesia

According to Azyumardi Azra, Islam entered Indonesia in a complex way. That is, Islam does not come from one place, the role of one group, and not at the same time. This phenomenon becomes interesting because there are many theories about the arrival of Islam in Indonesia (Negara, 1996, pp. 90-91). According to Arab theory, Islam came directly from Arabia to Indonesia in the 7th century AD. Hamka specifically stated that Islam entered Indonesia in 674 AD, brought by Arab traders. This theory is supported by Krawfurl, Keizer, Nieman, De Hollender, J. C Van Leur, Thomas W. Arnold, Al-Attas, Hamka, Djadjadiningrat, Mukti Ali, and the most persistent figure to defend this theory is Naquib Al-Attas (Daulay, 2018, p. 12). The Indian Gujarat theory is supported by Pojnapel, according to which Arabs belonging to the Shafi'i school emigrated and settled in India. Then brought Islam to the archipelago. This theory was developed by Snouck Hurgronje, after which the first Gujarat priests spread Islam in the archipelago, followed by the Arabs, followed by 12th century Islam in the archipelago. Snouck's opinion is supported by Moquette who concludes that Islam began in Gujarat. This conclusion is based on his observations of tombstones in Pasai, and in Gresik, East

Java, which are similar in shape to the tombstones in Cambay, Gujarat. Moquette's opinion is supported by Kern, Winstedt, Bosquet, Vlekke, Gonda, Schrieke, and Hall (Daulay, 2018, p. 12). While Pijnappel put forward three arguments for this theory; First, the reason for the school of fiqh. According to him two regions of India; Gujarat and Malabar were the first to embrace the Shafi'iyah school before being brought and developing in Southeast Asia. Second, for political reasons, with the fall of Baghdad's power, many Sufis then traveled to Southeast Asia via India. Third, the archaeological reasons in the form of tombstones found have similarities with tombstones from India (Arnold, 1982, p. 219).

Persian theory is evidenced by the discovery of Persian influence in people's lives in the 11th century. The evidence refers to the influence of language. This can be seen in the Arabic language used by the Indonesian people. Words ending in the letter "ta" in the word marbuthah when it stops are read as "has ". According to Nurkholis, adhering to the opinion of Hosseinn Djadjadiningrat shows that Arabic is not directly from Arabic, but from Persian, this theory focuses on the culture that lives in Indonesian Islamic society and is similar to India/Gujarat (Negara, 1996, pp. 90-91).

According to Chinese theory, Islam came to Indonesia brought by Chinese Muslim traders, through trade routes in the 7-8th century AD. The first place visited was Sumatra. This theory is not about the early arrival of Islam in Indonesia, but about Chinese Muslims providing data and information about

¹ <https://kumparan.com/tutur-literatur/mari-mengenal-perkembangan-sastra-dalam-peradaban-islam-1/full>

the presence of Muslims in Indonesia and their role in the development of the 15th and 16th centuries AD (Negara, 1996, pp. 90-91).

While the Turkish theory was put forward by Martin van Bruinessen, apart from Arabs and Chinese, Indonesians also accepted Islam from the Kurds from Turkey. The reasons he put forward were:

1. Islamic da'wah in Indonesia is held by Kurdish clerics
2. The book written by Kurdish scholars is used as a reference which has a wide influence
3. The influence of the Ulama Ibrahim al-Kuarani
4. The Syatariyah Order
5. The Barzanji tradition is popular in Indonesia.

In essence, theories about the entry of Islam into Indonesia have advantages and limitations. There is no fixed and definite theory. This opinion is based on the opinion of Azyumardi Azra "Indeed, the arrival of Islam in Indonesia in that year was complicated, not from one place, but from the role of one group, and not at the same time.". This argument is the basis for everyone to accept all the above theories, but not without "attitude". Ideally, the existence of this theory does not stop research and debate about the coming of Islam. Because there is still a lot of room to modify or improve the existing theory.

The history of the entry of Arabic literature in Indonesia

The entry of Arabic literature will not be separated from the entry of Islam itself, because when Islam came, Islam brought many influences in terms of

language, culture, and literature itself. Talking about history, there will be many opinions from the figures who mention when it happened, because the historical approach prioritizes and pays attention to the elements of place, time, object, background, and the perpetrators of the event. No one knows for sure when the entry of Arabic literature into Indonesia is, but many writers and figures predict the entry of Arabic literature into Indonesia is the same as the entry of Islam itself. However, the majority agreed that Arabic literature entered Indonesia in the 18th century through traders from Arabia, Persia, etc. The relationship between Arabic literature and the literature and culture of the archipelago can be traced through various historical traces from the past to the present, both in the form of the translation process and the intertext mode that encourages the birth of new works.²

Development of Arabic Literature in Indonesia

The influence of Islam in the archipelago was very clearly visible in the 15th-16th century AD, this was evidenced by the development of Islamic teachings and several Arab traditions that influenced Islam in the archipelago because of the arrival of Islam to the archipelago was due to the services of Arab traders. This influence can be taken into account in the Malay literary tradition in the form of poetry or poetry derived from Arabic, namely syiir. Syi'ir is a sentence that expresses a beautiful vision and imagination, which is consciously

² <https://www.suaramerdeka.com/hiburan/pr-041291866/mengapresiasi-khazanah-dan->

[kekayaan-pemikiran-arab-di-indonesia?page=all](https://www.suaramerdeka.com/hiburan/pr-041291866/mengapresiasi-khazanah-dan-kekayaan-pemikiran-arab-di-indonesia?page=all)

composed of rhythm and rhyme (Hamid, 1995, p. 13). Besides syi`ir, there is also the term nadzam. Nadzam includes sentences consisting of rhythm and rhyme. But what distinguishes syi`ir and nazham is the element of imagination. There is no imaginary element in nadzam. On the other hand, nadzam has many elements of reality and science (Rauf, 2009, pp. 114-129).

Poetry or poetry was born in the archipelago in the 16th century. Before that, poetry that could fully meet the criteria was nowhere to be found in Malay oral literature or in other Indonesian nations regarding poetry that met the requirements to be called syair. However, the oldest examples of poetry can be found in the works of the great Sufi poet Hamzah Fansuri, which indirectly proves that poetry had become a new genre at the turn of the 16th century. Early scholars such as A. tew and Naqib considered Malay poetry to be an influence on Arabic and Persian poetry because Malay poetry resembles the well-known Persian ruba'i in the a-a-a-a pattern (Braginsky, 1998, pp. 226-227).

In addition, Arabic literature in Indonesia has developed very rapidly, as can be seen from the number of universities that have opened Arabic language and literature study programs, both undergraduate and master's degrees. There are 44 Arabic Language and Literature study programs in Indonesia with 5 masters of Arabic Language and Literature. This amount is enough to show the interest of the Indonesian people in Arabic literature, even though the students are not purely from Indonesia, but also various countries. Not only in universities, but Islamic boarding schools, the majority are taught the characteristics of Arabic

literature, and how to make and process them. So, not a few pesantren candles to make beautiful syir.

Arabic literature in Indonesia

Prose

The word prose is taken from English, prose, some argue that the word prose comes from the Latin prose which means frankly. The prose is usually used to explain facts and ideas. The tally refers to a broader meaning, including not only sentences that are classified as literary works, but also non-fiction such as articles and essays. The prose is free writing that is not bound by the number of lines, the number of syllables in each line, not bound by rhythm or rhyme like poetry. The prose is different from poetry because the rhythm changes. It is bigger and uses language that is by the meaning of the vocabulary (lexical)(Hairuddin & Radmila, 2018, p. 2).

1. Old prose

In Indonesia, there are several prose works found by the author, including his own Hamzah Fanshuri, yakni (1) *Asrar al-Arifin*; (2) *Sharab al-Asyikin*; (3) *Kitab Al-Muntahi / Zinat al-Muwahidin*. And there is still a lot of Arabic prose in Indonesia, it's just that the limitations of references and the obsolescence of writings that have not been recorded are obstacles to finding them.

2. New Prose

By the above understanding, according to the author, Arabic literacy is a form of prose development, because the prose grows t rapidly. In Indonesia, there are many magazines and journals in Arabic which are nothing but products of Islamic boarding schools and universities that have Arabic study programs. Things like that are a new type of prose based on its development.

The following are some Arabic literacy in the form of books written by Indonesian Ulama, namely: those in the form of nadzam searchyarh such as (1) K. Habibul Huda with his book *Tufatul Ahbab Sarh Kifayatuttolab*; dan (2) K. Abdul Wahid Zuhdi with his book *Mandhumah Fi Ilminnahwu*. While those in the form of free essays such as (1) K. Nawawi's book *Nihayatu Zaen*; (2) K. Maemoen Zubair's book *JauharuT Tauhid* dan (3) K. Fadol Assenori with a book *Kifayatuttolab*.

Poetry

Poetry is one of the ancient poetry. Poetry comes from Persia and was brought into the archipelago along with the entry of Islam into Indonesia. The word or term syair comes from Arabic, namely *Syi'ir* or *Shu'ur* which means feeling aware, then the word *Syu'ur* develops into *Syi'ru* which means poetry in general knowledge. According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary, poetry is an old poem in which each stanza consists of four lines (lines) ending in the same sound (Firdaus, Vardila, Ketrin, & Hutagalung, 2020, p. 91). Talking about poetry, the poetry is divided into old poetry and new poetry, new poetry tends to be freer not to follow the existing qofiyah and arudl, so wazan is more difficult to taqthi'.

In Indonesia, Halimi Zuhdy's poems are poetry that is in great demand by many people because the contents of his poems answer the concerns of the Indonesian people. Sholawat badrpun by K.H Ali Mansur can also be categorized as an Arabic poem in Indonesia because it contains imagination, imagination, and taste which are the keys to literature itself.

According to the author, *yala wathon* poetry can also be categorized as poetry with the details and considerations as above. Until now, poetry is still trending among young people, especially poetry that smells of romance. It is evident from the posts shared by the Indonesian people.

Translation Results

Many Arabic and Persian literary works have been translated into Malay and have left the forms of hikayat, syair, gazal, rubai, gurindam, masnawi, and barzanzi in the old Indonesian literary treasures. The study of tarjamah is currently much loved by the people of Indonesia, since the existence of the internet, translating is no longer considered a difficult thing. By using a copy and paste a copy of the source language from any country will be able to be accessed according to the desired target language. However, not everyone can be called a translator, because to become a translator one must have a certificate that is recognized and certified by senior translators.

Examples of translations in Indonesia such as Ra Faza's work (1) Stage and Mirror by Adonis (Diva Press, 2018); (2) Lovers from Palestine by Mahmoud Darwish (Diva Press, 2020); and (3) the sorrow of love is sweeter than a thousand pleasures; Divine Poems by Al-Hallaj (Circa Publishers, 2020).³, (4) *Al-Majdulin* by Ali Audah and others.

Arabic writers and translators in Indonesia

Ali Ahmad Bakatsir

Ali Ahmad Bakatsir is an Egyptian writer. His name may still be foreign to

³ <https://radarmadura.jawapos.com/features/28/09/2021/fazabinal-aliem-penerjemah-karya-sastra-arab>

Indonesian people. However, who would have thought that he was born in Indonesia. He was born on December 21, 1910, in Surabaya, East Java. His father is from Yemen and his mother is from Surabaya. He is active in writing novels, poetry, and plays. One of his famous works is a drama script entitled الفردوس (The Return of Paradise) which tells about the independence of Indonesia. He obtained Egyptian citizenship by order of the King of Egypt on August 22, 1951. Until finally, he died on November 10, 1969.⁴

Halimi Zuhdy

Halimi Zuhdy is an Indonesian writer who is famous for his local wisdom and extraordinary works. He is a lecturer at UIN Malang as well as the caretaker of the Darun Nun Islamic boarding school. His works are very well known and are often studied from various aspects. He is active in writing on various social media such as blogger, youtube, Instagram, and also facebook. His writings are often the answer to people's anxiety and unrest, so people refer to many who refer to his writings. As a highly educated person, he never uses high language that confuses readers, with light language, Halimi Zuhdy is famous for his simplicity and wisdom.

Ali Audah

He is a trusted writer, literary critic, and translator, especially for works of contemporary Arabic literature. He was born on July 14, 1924 in Bondowoso. Ali was not highly educated and was only in the second grade of elementary school. Ali is a true self-taught man. Reading books is his daily menu and devours

whatever he reads. Ali Audah is also known as an author who has religious intelligence, especially in his literary works. By mastering several foreign languages such as Arabic, English, Dutch, French, and German, he became someone who was able to open horizons in the East and West. He also translated al-Majdulin from the original book⁵

Fazabinal Aliem

He is a translator from Pragaan District, as a translator of Arabic literary works, and a lover of literary works, he hopes that the Arabic literary works he translates can contribute a little to Indonesian literature in the future. A repertoire mainly translating foreign literature into Indonesian. Ra Faza is also known as the pioneer of a platform that focuses on Arabic literature. The work of this 28-year-old man is usually shared on Instagram through sastraarab.com.

According to him, actually, without realizing it, Arabic literature is very close emotionally to Indonesians. Because we are part of eastern civilization. So it is not wrong to present it in Arabic literature. Indonesians, who have a Muslim majority, must also be close to Arabic texts. He managed to publish three of his translations. For example, Adonis' Stage and Mirror (Diva Press, 2018), Mahmoud Darwish's Lovers from Palestine (Diva Press, 2020), and Love's Despair are Sweeter Than a Thousand Pleasures; Divine

⁴ <https://medium.com/lantai-empat/ada-hubungan-apa-sastrawan-arab-dengan-indonesia-4d93b7a68981>

⁵ <https://www.republika.co.id/berita/p2pcfg396/ali-audah-sosok-pengilham>

Poems by Al-Hallaj (Circa Publishers, 2020).⁶

The influence of Arabic literature on Indonesian literature

Indonesian literature exists because it is influenced by Arabic literature, as well as Malay literature. Because of this, Arabic literature has made a great contribution to the literature and language that developed in Indonesia. The author takes an example from Hamzah Fanshuri's syiir work contained in Bobbi's Journal (Bobby, 2016). As for the indicators: First, the poem written by Hamzah Fansuri has several references to his relationship with the Arab world and Sufi Islam. Second, based on the historical facts mentioned above, Hamzah Fanshuri lived and settled in an area visited by many foreigners, including Arabs. Third, Hamzah Fansuri traveled to various places near his hometown, besides studying in Aceh, including Arabia. here's the explanation:

Language aspect

The influence of Arabic literature from the language aspect contained in Hamzah Fansuri's poetry can be seen in several categories, such as the vocabulary (mufradat) both absorbed into Indonesian, the terms Sufism, and the literary terms used. Like a snippet in the song of the pingai bird:

*Thayr al-'uryan unggas ruhani
Di dalam kandang hadrat Rahmani
Warnanya pingai terlalu safi
Tempatnya kursi yang maha 'ali*

Latin	Arabic	Meaning
Thayr	طير	Bird

'Uryan	عريان	Free or naked
Ruhani	روحاني	Associated with spirit, spirituality
Hadrat	حضره	Presence: before, your majesty
Rahmani	رحمن	Rahman: compassion
Safi	ساف	Salafi: a clean, honest, pure, sincere, true friend.
Kursi	كرسي	Seat: seat, position
'Ali	عالي	Tall

Inner Aspect

The influence of Arabic literature on Hamzah Fansuri's poems when viewed from the aspect of the theme (aghrad al-syi'r), then the purpose is seen. In Arabic syi'r is known for several purposes of syi'r, such as al-madh to praise, al-hija' to ridicule, al-ritsa' as lamentation, al-ghazal (love makings), and so on. In Sufi syi'r based on its theme and purpose, there are several styles of syi'r that developed closely related to Sufism, such as syi'r zuhud (ascetism poetic), syi'r al-Hubb al-Ilahi (syi'r divine love), syi'r al-Mada'ih al-Nabawiyah (syi'r praise to the Prophet), syi'r al-Hikmah wa al-wasab (syi'r wisdom and morals), syi'r al-Du'a (syi'r al-Du'a) ir prorer) and syi'r al-Tasbih (syi'r purification of God). In Hamzah Fansuri's poetry there are also poems with the theme of zuhud, such as:

*Dunia nin kau sandang-sandang
Manakan dapat ke bukit rantang*

⁶ <https://radarmadura.jawapos.com/features/28/09/2021/fazabinal-aliem-penerjemah-karya-sastra-arab>

*Angan-anganmu terlalu panjang
Manakan dapat segera memandang*

Hamzah Fansuri's poems on the theme of syi'r al-Tasbih (syi'r purification of God) use words that glorify God, such as:

*Subhanallah terlalu kamil
Menjadi insan 'alim dan jahil
Dengan hamba-Nya da'im ia wasil
Itulah mahbub bernama 'adil (tasbih)*

In Hamzah Fansuri's poems, the theme of praise (madah) to God dominates most of his poems. The words he uses to take the form of symbols of majesty, such as: Bahr al-buthun tiada bermula

*Ombaknya makhfi tiada bernama
Olehnya ahad belum terbuka
Adanya quddus suatu juga*

The influence of Hamzah Fansuri's poems is not only from the aspect of the theme of the poem but also the influence of Arabic literature on the imagination style of Hamzah's poems. Whereas Hamzah Fansuri is a Sufi who adheres to the Wahdat al-Manifest concept, he also does imagination. This high imagination, in the end, is difficult to be expressed in words because of the limitations of human language, so it requires various symbols and parables. In Arabic literature, the use of these symbols and parables has become common in poetry.

In Arabic literature, the parable or tasbih of the highest quality is broadly divided into two types, namely majaz and isti'a'rah, both of which are summarized in the study of tasbih found in Bayan science, in the object of study of Balaghah science. In Hamzah Fansuri's poems this parable, both majaz, and isti'arah, is very

common. The song Burung Pingai, which is the symbol of a bird as a parable in describing the wanderings of the soul or spirit in search of perfection.

*hayr al-'uryan unggas ruhani
Di dalam kandang pingai
hadrat rahmani Warnanya pingai
terlalu safi
Tempatnya kursi yang maha 'ali*

All the poems created by Hamzah Fansuri in each of his stanzas are symbolic and parable. Thayr al-'uryan is interpreted as a naked bird, but Hamzah uses it as a parable for his soul that is free to wander. This can be seen from the indicator (qarinah) found in the word that follows, namely spiritual fowl. In the next word, he mentions the word cage as a parable for his soul which is in a certain container given by God. Almost all the words and sentences contained in Hamzah's poems contain parables (tasybih).

Conclusion

Literature is an object that will never run out of discussion because every year there is a lot of literature with different themes and types. Likewise Arabic literature which is studied by any country and in various theories. In Indonesia in particular, the influence of Arabic literature can be seen clearly in Indonesian literature and Malay literature, starting from the aspect of language, spirituality and the form of literature itself. Regional Arabic Literature is here to specify what types of Arabic literature there are, and who are the literary figures in the country, because the lack of references and those who study it makes many people who still don't know it, it is hoped that further researchers will expand their

knowledge and add regional Arabic literature in other Southeast Asian countries.

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