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RHYME AND ITS FUNCTION IN NORTH SUMATRA MALAY SOCIETY AND CULTURE¹

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ABSTRACT

This research discusses about the poetry and its function in culture of North Sumatera Malay society. Poetry is one of wide old Malay rhyme was known in domestic language. The proverb of Malay North Sumatera has function as a ceremony, to preserve the Malay culture as expression of an entertainment amusement and esthetics structurally, poetry in North Malay Sumatera culture follow the norm and arrange the poetry order in general like existence of addition and fill aslo sum up the line in one couplet consist of four rows (kuatrin).

Keyword: Proverb, North Malay Sumatera

Introduction

The Malay community in North Sumatra realize that their existence is culturally associated with others regions in Malay world. The Malay world itself is a cultural region inhabited by the Malay race or group that spread over the main region of Southeast Asia to Polynesia, Easter, New Zealand, Madagascar, Formosa, and its diaspora over the world.

Since the emergence of nation states in the mid 20th century, in Southeast Asia alone the Malay society and culture located in Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore, Thailand, Philippines, and the minority in Burma, Vietnam, Cambodia, etc . They share the same history that related to the magnitude of the two empires of Srivijaya and Majapahit, beside the Islamic sultanates since the 13th century.

In Indonesia, the Malay society and culture reside in regions of Tamiang, North Sumatra, Riau, South Sumatra, Kalimantan, Bangka Belitung, Batavia, etc. Even in a broader sense, nearly all of Indonesia's ethnic incorporated into the Malay race and culture of Polynesia. It shares the binding of ethnic cultures similarities. It is also characterized by the use of Malay as the core and root for national language, not only in Indonesia but also in Malaysia, and Brunei Darussalam. Including the Malay communities in North Sumatra, they practice Malay and its custom in social life. Malay and its custom is being the main root in shaping their identity and integrity. Besides as the universal binding, Malay culture also gives space to enrich each culture regions. In North Sumatra, the Malay communities grouped by the area of 15th century Malay sultanates to the

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present. They grouped into Malay Langkat, Deli Serdang, Asahan, Batubara and Labuhanbatu. While based on the territory of the empire, into Langkat Sultanate, Deli Serdang, Asahan, Kualuh, Kotapinang, Merbau, and Panai. For now, some of them still exist. Fortunately, the Indonesian government designates the royal family and their descendants the power to carry out Malays tradition. Generally, a sultan also referred as traditional leader. Thus, tradition plays an important role in the context of continuity and change in the Malay culture.

Malay Culture and Tradition Hierarchy

The Malay society in North Sumatra has a culture that known as Malay culture. Culture refers to cumulative of ideas, activities and objects produced by humans in everyday lives through the process of learning and teaching (see Koentjaraningrat 1990). Culture is as creativity, initiative, and sense of human in response to their life. Culture is also the identity of group of people, ethnicity, nation, or race. Obviously, culture is the essence of human life.

Culture includes the dimensions of content and form, which work in synergy. The contents of culture are often referred to as the seven elements of universal culture that consist of: (1) religion, (2) language, (3) technology, (4) economy, (5) organization, (6) education, and (7) arts. Sometimes, a culture genre involves some element of culture. For example, the North Sumatra Malay rhymes contained elements of religious systems and cosmology, arts, education, organization, and economics. It also observed in songket artifacts that contains the economy, technology, organization, education, religion and cosmology element.

Culture also has dimensional form, which consist of three layers. The first manifestation is in the form of an idea or ideas. The second is activities. And the third is the objects or artifacts. The dimension of North Sumatra Malay culture is in the first form or idea. For example, the idea of custom that based on *syarak* and *syarak* itself based on *kitabullah* (Qur'an). This means that the Malay culture based on Islamic law (*syarak*). Furthermore, *syarak* is based on the teachings of God that codified in the Qur'an as continuance of the previous scriptures: Psalms, Gospel and the Torah. Thus all aspects of Malay culture or custom are based on the Qu'ran (furnished by the Hadith, fatwas of the scholars, etc). Some examples of the Malay cultural activities in North Sumatra are *tepung tawar*, coronation of baby name, maintaining a relationship, marriage ceremonies, practice Malay, and so on. These activities should be based on the traditional idea that widely adopted. The example of the third form of Malay culture are observed in traditional house, Karas-Karas culinary, *roti jala*, curry, puniaram cake, boats, canoes, pottery, carving, handwriting, etc. All of these aspects strengthen the Malay sociocultural identity.

Moreover, the Malay community has typical customs concepts within its cultural framework. Customs is synonymous to culture in the context of Malay civilization. Hence, customs is fundamental for the way of think, act, and culture production of Malays. The customs itself is institutions for Malays from the beginning, even before the arrival of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam.

According to Lah Husni, the Malays ethnic custom covered four varieties, namely: (1) the authentic custom; (2) the customized custom; (3) the established custom, and (4) tradition.

(1) The authentic custom in the terms of time and circumstances should be appropriate. Reduction to its practice results the shortage of value, while addition results the redundance. This process is based on: (a) the conscience that is reflected in the traditional teachings, such as the rhyme of *pisang emas bawa belayar; masak sebiji di dalam peti; hutang emas dapat dibayar; hutang budi dibawa mati*. (b) the sincere that based the deeds for the God's sake; (c) harmonize decision, based on the mutual interests that reflected on the rhymes: *pisang seikat digulai sebelanga, dimakan bersama-sama. yang benar itu harus dibenarkan, yang salah disalahkan. Adat murai berkicau, tak mungkin menguak. Adat lembu menguak, tak mungkin berkicau*. This authentic custom, according to the concept of EMIC or etnosains Malays are: full not abundant, contains no less, the large should be raised, the old are respected, the small is cherished, the miserable is well-treated, the ignorant should be taught, the righteous should be entitled, the strong should be forbear, the high should not choke, the clever not cheat, reasonable living, eat worthily. Shortly, it is a harmony life that covers the individual, country, and the environment life. Hence, life is unselfish. This custom is unchanged (Lah Husni, 1986: 51).

(2) The customized custom is custom that work on a particular basis, subjected to consensus of the people in these regions. Then, the implementation submitted by people to trusted authority. The custom leader referred as king or prince. This custom is practiced for the happiness of community, both physically and spiritually, wordly and heavenly, in the present and future. However, the Malay countries have their own customary. It is reflected in saying *lain lubuk lain ikannya lain padang lain belalangnya*. The differences circumstances, places and progress of the country carry out the variance in habitual and practice according to the will of its community or inherited from their ancestors. But, the variance is occurred in the terms of practice, not fundamental. The customized custom is something that has been accepted to be a habitual or practices that resulted from the appropriate deliberation which can be flexibly modified in such way. The basis for customized custom are *penuh tidak melimpah, berisi tidak kurang, terapung tidak hanyut, terendam tidak basah* (Lah Husni, 1986: 62)

(3) The established custom is the habitual or practice that gradually become customary. It is reflected in adage: *sekali air bah, sekali tepian berpindah, sekali zaman beredar, sekali adat berkisar*. Despite the custom is changed, its essence unchanged: *adat pasang turun dan naik, adat api panas, dalam gerak berseimbangan, di antara akhlak dan pengetahuan*. The change only occurred in the form of diversity, not in the core and original purpose. For example, formerly, the Malay wears a hat or headband in traditional ceremony, but now, a skullcap is appropriate. In addition, a prominence Malay wear kris and walked by an accompanion, but for now this occasion is obsolete. Formerly, the yellow stuffs were referred to royal, but for now it is general (Lah Husni, 1986: 62).

4) Tradition is a collection of habits, particularly the special ceremonies such as marriage, coronation of the king, and the king's funeral. In the term of customary, these practices tend to be as a set of laws, for example: customary law, human rights, and so on.

The Malay cultural background and customs is usually expressed in its language, literature, and art. Malay society is recognized as polite society. Language plays an important role in communication framework among the Malays community, as well as outsiders. They use Malay in its community interaction. One of particular common in Malay society interaction is using rhyme.

Rhyme as Cultural Common in North Sumatra Malay Culture

In the context of the Malay culture, the rhymes clearly become one of the Malay identities. Rhyme used among the Malay community, regardless the social strata. Hence, rhyme used in various cultural activities, such as: *merisik*, proposing, wedding, circumcision, baby name coronation, *akikah*, noble coronation ceremonies, national holidays, etc.

Rhyme is one of the old Malay poetry which is widely known in archipelago languages. Generally, rhymes consist of four lines (or four lines in the written form). It is also recognized as a stanza in literary theory. In the end of each line, rhyme has *ab ab* and *aa aa* pattern. Initially, rhyme was an oral literature, but today we also find it in written one.

Beside the general characteristics, North Sumatra Malay rhyme has a distinction with the Malay World. According to Harun Mat Piah, the rhyme is a kind of poetry in general, consisting of: four rows in one double, four words of a line, has the final rhyme *ab ab* pattern with slight variations and exceptions. Each double-line is divided into two units: *shader* and *purpose*. Each double-line has an idea. The characteristics of the Malay rhyme can be viewed from two important aspects, namely external and internal. External aspect is in terms of the structure and all the visual characteristics that can be seen and heard, which include the following points.

(1) Consist of separated double-line. Each double-line consists of lines that are parallel and in pairs of 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 and so on, but the most common are four lines (quatrain). (2) Each line contains four basic words. Since the word of Malay generally disyllabic words, when including affixes, markers and functional words, it creates 8 to 10 syllables for each line. It means that the most important unit is the word, while the syllable is other aspect. (3) The climax, which is an extension or an excess number of units of syllables or words mean two couplets. (4) Each stanza divides into two units namely *shader* and *purpose*. Therefore a quatrain has two couplets: the *shader* and *purpose*. (5) There is the fixed rhyme scheme, such as *ab ab* rhyme, with a slight variation of *aa aa* pattern. Also, there is an internal rhyme, or rhyme for parallel sayings but it is not an important features. Besides rhyme, assonance is also the dominant aspect in the rhyme formation. (6) Each stanza of rhyme, whether they compound of two, four, six, and so on, contains a mind rounded and complete. A stanza is seen as a single entity.

The internal aspects are elements that merely be perceived subjectively based on the experience and comprehension of audience, including: (7) The use of certain symbols based on the responses and world view of community. (8) The relationship of meaning between shader pair and content pair, both for concrete relation and abstract symbols (Harun Mat Piah, 1989: 91.123, 124).

Malay people in North Sumatra use the particular developed rhyme in their local area, in addition to use the common Malay rhymes. The common rhymes that found in Malay world and used by North Sumatra Malay is as follows.

*Sri Mersing lagu Melayu,
Dinyanyikan biduan zaman dahulu,
Kalau kau tahu malang nasibku,
Bagaikan kaca terhempas ke batu.*

*Pulau pandan jauh di tengah,
Di balik pulau si angsa dua,
Hancur badan dikandung tanah,
Budi yang baik dikenang juga.*

*Bungalah tanjung putih berseri,
Dipakai oleh tuan puteri,
Hiasan sanggul kanan dan kiri,
Menambalah cantik dipandang berseri.*

According to the authors, the distinction between the North Sumatra Malay rhyme and Malay world is only in its diction (choice of words). The following stanzas will show it clearly.

*Anak ikan dimakan ikan,
Ikan memakanlah kepalanya,
Banyaklah hitam perkara hitam,
Itulah eloklah penggodanya.
Satu ditutuh dua ditebang,
Tinggal sedahan sampiran kain,
Tempatlah jauh lagu dikenang,
Konon pula tempat lah main.*

*Tanjung Katung airnya biru,
Tempat hendak mencuci muka,
Lagi sekampung hatiku rindu,
Konon pula jauh di mata.*

*Kalau meletus Gunung Sibayak,
Kotalah Medan menjadi abu,
Angin berhembus layarku koyak,
Ke mana arah hendak ku tuju.*

*Tanam pinang sirapat-rapat,
Agar puyuh tak dapat berlari,
Ku pinang-pinang tak dapat-dapat,
Ku pujuk-pujuk ku bawa berlari.*

The Function of Rhymes

The Definition of Usage and Function

According to Bronislaw Malinowski, the function of the point is that all the cultural activities it is actually intended to satisfy a set of human being desire associated with whole life. Art - an element of culture, is occurred because the human being want to satisfy the desire of beauty. Science also arises from the human being desire for comprehension. However, many cultural activities occur due to a combination of some sort of human needs. Based on this reasoning, a researcher can analyze and explain many problems in society and human culture.

In line with the opinion of Malinowski, the North Sumatra Malay rhymes arise and evolve to satisfy a set of Malay society desire, including the beauty satisfied. Moreover, those need accompanied by other functions, such as community integration, entertainment, and other cultural continuity.

A.R. Radcliffe-Brown argued that the function is closely related to the social structure of society. The social structures are viable, whereas individuals may change any time. Thus, Radcliffe-Brown, who viewed this function in terms of its contribution to society, argued that the function is part of the contribution to overall activities in the social system of the community. The objective function is to achieve a level of harmony or internal consistency, as describes as follow.

By the definition here offered 'function' is the contribution which a partial activity makes of the total activity of which it is a part. The function of a particular social usage is the contribution of it makes to the total social life as the functioning of the total social system. Such a view implies that a social system ... has a certain kind of unity, which we may speak of as a functional unity. We may define it as a condition in which all parts of the social system work together with a sufficient degree of harmony or internal consistency, i.e., without producing persistent conflicts can neither be resolved not regulated (1952:181).

In paralel with Radcliffe-Brown, Malay rhymes can be considered as a portion of social structure of Malay society. Rhyme is a part of Malay activities that contribute to the whole, which may serve as the binding for continuation of Malay cultural life. Its function is to achieve a further degree of harmony and internal consistency. The achievement of these conditions is motivated by a variety of social and cultural conditions in the Malay community, for example, the ethnic heterogeneous environments in Malaysia and Indonesia, and as collection of Malay ethnic identity and other issues.

Sudarsono who viewed the function of art, especially from a practical and integrative relationships, drawn three main functions of art, namely: (1) for the sake of social or ritual paraphernalia; (2) as an expression of individual feeling which satisfied the entertain needs, and (3) a presentation of aesthetics (1995). In

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Angin berhembus layarku koyak,
Ke mana arah hendak ku tuju.*

line with his opinion, the Malay rhyme serves the social functions, personal expression for entertainment satisfaction and aesthetic presentation.

Rhyme Function as Ceremony Paraphernalia

One of rhyme function in Malay culture is as ceremonies paraphernalia. In the traditional context, the ceremony is usually categorized as customs, the part of the traditional strata. In Malay culture, ceremonies covers the entire life cycle of Malays people, ranging from the pregnancy, birth, puberty, marriage, funeral, etc.

In those Malay ceremonies, the rhyme is always engaged in practice. Rhyme presented with additional words or proverbs, adjusted to the context of ceremony. Rhyme in the context of the ceremony is usually presented by a spokesman or rhyme expert who mastering ceremony manner. In Malay culture, the ceremonies is also accompanied by the prayer, incantation, etc.

Rhyme Function in Preserving the Malay Culture

North Sumatra Malay rhyme contributes to the stability and sustainability of Malay culture. In North Sumatra, the Malay rhyme contains history, myth and legend element which in turn is able to contribute to the preservation of culture. Through the rhyme, Malay people can learn the right and wrong behaviors of supporting community. Besides, the moral values obviously reflected in Malay rhymes. Hence, the effort to realize the stability and sustainability of Malay culture through the rhyme may be viewed from the concepts of: *tak Melayu hilang di bumi, esa hilang dua terbilang, sekali layar terkembang surut kita berpantang*, which is contained in the North Sumatra Malay rhyme.

Moreover, the North Sumatra Malay rhyme functioned as cultural preservation. As exemplified in religion teaching that the human culture is impermanent. However some are sustainable. Some of vanished cultures are: Ad, Thamud, Madyan, Ur, etc., and the sustainable ones are some of Noah people, the Muslims, who descend from Adam. Through the art of Islamic Malay culture, Islamic teachings may continue and sustainable along the dimensions of space and time. Islamic culture should be passed down from generation to generation. Islamic art and culture is taught through a variety of social institutions, such as *pesantren* or *makhtab*, public schools, and other mosque youth groups. The younger generation must be escorted and guided to preserve the Islamic culture for next generations. This concept is realized in the Malay rhyme, that Malays will be lasting on earth.

Rhyme function as Entertainment and Aesthetic Expression

One of the functions of North Sumatra Malay rhyme is to entertain. It observed in song and dance that serves as entertainment functions. They are typically presented in the taverns, hotels, or stage performances. In this context, the main function of song rhyme is to entertain visitors. The visitors who want to sing or dance must purchase tickets. Usually the organizers pointed out that the purpose of this performance solely for Malay music or dance offerings, not for commercial in order to preserve the legacy of Malay tradition. According to author, the economic factors are the main reason for this context. However, the

purchasing of tickets, buy drinks and foods resulted the economic gain of organizer.

Another Malay rhyme function in the terms of entertainment is disregarding from the teachings of Islam. Precisely, the entertainment here is to satisfy the principle of the human sense of beauty through various dimensions. The human being by nature loves the beauty. After enjoying the beauty of they will entertained, and their soul filled with Ruhiah aspects and enlightenment (*aufklärung*). Various examples of the human desire for entertainment is seen in modern society. Various types of entertainment is found in venues such as shopping malls, karaoke, gymnastics, fantasy world, theaters and movies, sports, and etc. Thus the art of Islamic culture also contains functions as entertainment, which is based on the nature and as one of grace and favor given by God.

Closing

From the descriptions above, we can derive some conclusion. Structurally, the rhyme of North Sumatra Malay culture is following the general norms and rules, such as the presence of shader and content. Likewise, the number of lines of a stanza frequently in four lines (quatrain) and also using binary rhyme and pair rhyme. The communication content that found in Malay songs, the rhymes usually tailored to the groove melody and given a distinctive style.

Finally, the functions of rhyme in North Sumatra Malay culture according to author are as a means of ceremonies, aesthetic expression and entertainment, and preserving the Malay culture. The rhyme also serves as integrator for sociocultural and sustainability of the Malay culture.

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