

## LITERARY TRADITION OF THE SEA IN MALAY SOCIETY ON THE EAST COAST OF NORTH SUMATERA AS BEHAVIOR GUIDANCE IN PREVENTING DISASTER

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### Abstract

Numerous social researches have stated that Malay society as an aquatic society because the place orientation of Malay society is referred to water area (river and sea). This article deals with norms and values in the literary tradition of the sea in Malay society East coast of North Sumatera. This area is troubled by disasters such as flood, tornado, tsunami (*pasang Padani*) and great post. One of the causes of these disasters is human error, that is, a lack of awareness in maintaining their relationship with environment proportionally. The literary tradition is used as attitude guidance for not damage the environment and habitat. This values and norms is a must tied within mind and behavior of people who live in the east coast of North Sumatera. The discussion uses qualitative-naturalistic with the anthro-po-literature approach. It shows that values and norms in literary tradition have a great relationship with their cultural behavior and their beliefs toward Islam.

**Keywords:** Literary tradition of the sea, Malay, disasters.

### 1. Introduction

In Malay society of east coast of North Sumatera, the sea is the place orientation and also place for gaining, earning, and heading for Allah the Almighty, formed in norms and values that should be obeyed near the sea and near the environment in order to prevent conflict among God's creatures, especially between human and their environment. Hence, those values and norms are exposed and packed in forms of literary tradition which are uttered and inherit from generation to generation as local wisdom. This culture, as for easy to remembered, comprehended, and be held and tied with people's behavior, it is framed in society social system which known as *adat istiadat* (custom) and reflected in *adat bersendikan syara'*, *syara' bersendikan kitabullah*.

Various kinds and forms of the literary tradition of the sea in Malay society East coast of North Sumatera, such as *pantang larang* (prohibition), *ungkapan adat* (custom phrase) and *peribahasa* (proverb). All of that literary tradition pour ideas and as the source of people

behavior when they are near or in the sea or in the coast area. This idea is not separated from showing the importance of maintaining behavior to prevent disasters. Moreover, the area and the situation is troubled with disaster such flood and tornado and tsunami (Malay society often called it by *pasang Padani*) and great post.

As stated above, this article shows and analyzes literary tradition in the sea. This article collects and analyzes the content of literary tradition which tied in people activities near or on the sea. Hence, shows its existence and its message as rules and norms when people are near or on the sea. Those will be discussed and analyzed from the perspective of anthropo-literature approach.

## 2. Literature Review

Syaifuddin and Sinar (2002, p. 75) state that literary tradition in the relation to the sea such *pantang larang* (prohibition), *ungkapan adat* (custom phrase) and *peribahasa* (proverb) in Malay society east coast of North Sumatera as local wisdom functions as i) conservation and natural resources and ii) developing natural resources and iii). Attitudes and moral guidance in a society. Moreover, the literary tradition of the sea shows values which are integrated toward to guide behavior and can be developed to the personal character of the society.

## 3. Research Method

This article of the literary tradition of Malay society uses descriptive qualitative methods with naturalistic approaches from a literature perspective to analyze behavior guidance in preventing disaster. Informants are selected to who are born, live and work in the area in the sea environment. Data are collected by interviewing and audio-recording one-to-one. Hence, this article through text and context of the literary tradition of Malay society east coast of North Sumatera will reveal; a) the relationship between the society and their environment, b) the relationship among society members, c) relationship between the society and social structure and social institution, d) relationship between society and culture at a certain place and time, and e) the relationship between religious awareness or para-religious (Ratna, 2004, p. 351).

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Data Representation

Referring to theory and method, various literary tradition of the sea which lives among the society members and related to preventing disasters are collected as follows:

#### 4.1.1 "Tolong-tolongan"

Based on the informant (S. Gea, 59, personal communication, March 17, 2019), this literary tradition is an *adat* activity in society especially to a person who daily earns from the sea. Texts are uttered by the ship or boat skipper. The utterance is solemnly so the people who are doing activities in the sea understand the meaning that "*Tolong-tolongan*" as the heritage from ancestor and shows for a safe journey from disaster such *pasang padani* and great post. This tradition is done and comprehended by the ship skipper because he is trusted by old people and king in the boat and the ship when going to the sea. Some texts of "*Tolong-tolongan*" are read as:

“...mau saling memperhatikan antar sesama,  
mau saling merasakan sakit, senangnya antar sesama.  
Yang buta peniup sanai, yang tuli pelepas letusan bedil,  
yang lumpuh menghuni kapal, yang kuat pemikul jangkar,  
yang bodoh di suru suruh, yang cerdas lawan berunding,  
yang tua tempat bertanya, yang pandai tempat belajar...”

#### 4.1.2 “Mengurus layar-layar”

This text “*Mengurus layar-layar*” reveals the trust on Allah SWT The Almighty -creatures who accompany humans and ship for directing to destination and behavior toward the sea situation according to nature and power of Allah. Texts are occasionally uttered by a person who goes to the sea. This tradition is tied to Mualim Besar and Mualim Kecil of ship or boat. Based on one of society member named Pawang Haji Sopyan, 61, *pawang*, public figure in Sicanggang-Langkat, he believed in any ignorance toward this message will cause disaster such tornado and great post which destroy valuable things (Sopyan, personal communication, March 22, 2019). Part of the lyrics as follows;

“.. *simambang pergi berlayar, membawa rasi dalam lipatan,  
Kalau tak lalu dandang di air, digurun kulakukan...*”

#### 4.1.3 “Bagaikan Tukang Petak”

Literary Tradition texts of “*Bagaikan Tukang Petak*” is delivered and uttered by a person called as *Juru Batu*. The form of this text is poet tradition classified as *petua Adat*. Some of the lyrics as:

“..*Alu tersandung patah tiga, alu tertumbuk pada tebing, kubalut luka dengan kapas,  
tiada semalu semalu ini, arang tercoreng pada keping, walau ke laut kutuntut balas...*”

Understanding the text which contains the importance of a person in directing anchor and head of the ship likened as *Tumenggung*. He has to master the situation on the right and left the side of the ship. The message of the text also shows how important to tie up the soul with the sea to prevent disaster.

#### 4.1.4 “Awak Perahu”

Based on the information given by the informant, Pak Icik, 53, fisherman and artist in Pantai Cermin-Serdang Bedagai, the message of this text is to thicken the solidarity among friend who sailed together in the sea. Like a free person, without discriminate and distinguish tribes, nation, and religion. The literary tradition of “*Awak Perahu*” if seen from the form of the text is *syair*. The texts are about happiness and freedom of a free man in earning all the wealth of the sea. Therefore, one soul has to keep it from danger and disaster from God (Icik, personal communication, March 5, 2019). The texts are as follow:

“...*carilah kerja yang bermanfaat, kerja yang lurus tiada sesat, manfaatnya dirasa sekalian umat...janganlah lupa tiada berbeda sesama makhlukNya agar sampai diakhirat...*”

#### 4.1.5 “Mala Kiwi”

The text of literary tradition is uttered at the waiting situation from the earning of the sea on the ship or the boat. The text reveals things concerning the *pantangan* behavior on “*Mambang tali arus*”, “*Pusat tasek Peuh jenggi*”, and “*Empat penjuru penjaga lautan dan*

*persekitarannya*". Occasionally in the utterance is connected to the law concerning the event which might occur in the sea. Therefore, one should appreciate the freedom of the sea creature. Among the texts are as follow;

“...kerja dan usaha berfaeda terhadap agama tidak menyalah, terhadap adat tidak menyanggah, terhadap undang tidak berkilah, faedahnya jelas manfaatnya ada, Mahkluk lain pun memberi ridha hingga dunia akhirat mendapat berkah...”

#### 4.1.6 “Pantang Larang Balai Lentang”

Tradition poet as *pantang larang* reveals that no one is allowed to a certain place in the sea called “*Balai Lentang*” without any important things to do. This place is believed as the place to gather and to give advice and have a consultation with creatures who keep the sea. This behavior is felt when a disaster is coming.

#### 4.1.7 “Pantang Larang Balai Bujur”

Literary tradition formed as *Pantang Larang Balai Bujur* gives the meaning about a person who goes and stays in a certain place such as *Mambang* place or *Sanai* plays and does activities. Therefore, if a person goes to that place, he will get disaster and also people around him.

#### 4.1.8 “Pantang Larang Puaran Lawang”

Literary tradition formed as *Pantang Larang Puaran Lawang* reveals that no one is allowed to stay in *Puaran Lawang* which is on the ship or boat. This is the place where ropes are kept. Except for the ship skipper and “*tukang Agung*”. If the ship skipper goes there, then he will be punished. This situation is believed that *Puaran Lawang* is the area of an unseen creature who keep the sea. So if they are disturbed by humans, disaster will come.

### 4.2 *Literary Tradition and Its Society*

Based on the previous description about the existence of the literary tradition, including the meaning and the message, show that:

#### 4.2.1 *Relationship between human and his environment*

Based on the statement from one of the members of the society name Abdul Aziz, 65, public figure, if comprehended all the tradition in a sea of Malay society east coast of North Sumatera always shows the friendly relation with nature and the creatures of Allah SWT and effects the life and the safety of society members. It is pictured if tornado or disaster come toward the ship or boat, the ship skipper has to throw some of the loads into the sea for their safety and balance. A person who has more or person who has less have to voluntary throw their things to get the balance with the sea. Throwing away things without balance will cause disaster (A. Aziz, personal communication, March 2, 2019).

#### 4.2.2 *Relationship between society and other society*

This relationship is pictured when something happens, such stopping over at the harbor or island or coast, they have to discuss first and if agreed the ship can go ahead to the destination, But without any discussion, he will be accused of doing the wrong thing. In the case above, if a ship wants to stop over at a harbor, the people on board have to discuss first with the society in the land. If they get an agreement then the ropes can be done neatly and after the ropes and sails are done, the consultation has to be done with the person who steers the boat through “*juru batu*” and “*tukang agung*” so that the boat can sail ahead as planned according to the “*adat istiadat*”. This shows appreciation between societies.

#### 4.2.3 Relationship between society and the social structure and social institution

This relationship can be seen in the event if the boat sails to the sea and everyone on board should obey the skipper and the regulation. Just like stated in values and norms in the texts and context of the literary tradition of the sea which reveals that at the moment the boat sails, "Mualim" tell the "Tukang" about the regulations and order his man to tighten the ropes properly and to prevent fire. Fire is a disaster which often occurs in the sea.

Young people on board have to watch out and careful in doing their jobs because if the boat float uncontrolled and get stuck, the responsibility will be put on the young people on board. According to Syukri, 70, public figure, "sepuh" in the society of Negeri Kota Lama-Labuhan Bilik, young people on board have to be careful because if they make mistakes they have to be punished and pay fine (Syukri, personal communication, March 17, 2019).

#### 4.2.4 Relationship between society and culture at a certain place and certain time

Understanding the context and the texts of literary tradition of the sea, there are four things on board which can be given punishment. They are: if a person wearing symbols of *Adat*, such as "keris" and "tumbuk lada" which has a conflict with *adat* (custom) because no one on board wearing those symbols. Therefore, the person should be punished to prevent disaster.

#### 4.2.5 Relationship with religious awareness and religious people

Understanding some messages from the texts of the literary tradition of the sea Malay society East coast of North Sumatera shows that the relation between the society members and religious awareness in the syncretic form being Moslem does not make the society leave their beliefs and old practice that inherit from the previous ancestor. Through the message of the literary tradition texts of the sea shows that the society member still mixes their beliefs with *syari'a* or Islam beliefs. "Pemangku" or public figures of *Adat* still has strong submissive toward the old tradition which regarded as *keramat* (holy). All the activities and policies are for the safety of society.

This situation also stated by Keesing (1992, p. 94) about the role of religion in human lives that religion and beliefs is the symbol of a system that function to gain strong, deep and sustainable spirit and motivation for humankind by creating concepts in factual situation so the situation and motivation are clearly portrayed in the society especially when they are in the sea.

## 5. Conclusions

According to the discussion above on values and norms and also the relationship between society and culture, it can be assumed that in all activities of Malay society who live in the east coast of North Sumatera are concerning with the values and norms which revealed in the literary tradition. And they use them as part of their behavior as it is said in regulations and ritual in order to encourage the member of the society in fulfilling their needs. One of the important things is safety from disaster in the sea or in the environment of the sea. Also, the understanding of basic culture is the means to maintain the human lives and universal belonging as the result of a process of learning and its implication, therefore Malay society east coast of North Sumatera are the owner of those values and norms which revealed from some texts and context of literary tradition.

Hence, basically, the value and norms are created in the live activities of Malay society east coast of North Sumatera and the area around it. Because of lives is presented by groups of people, therefore literary tradition of the sea is created in guiding individual behavior in

the society. Various behavior becomes a world to be faced. According to that, the literary tradition in Malay society east coast of North Sumatera is created to maintain lives in preventing disaster.

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