

Religious Hegemony in The Serat Menak Lare by Yasadipura I and Its Relevance as a Material for Indonesian Reading Literacy

Arief Rahmawan¹, Sarwiji Suwandi², Sumarwati³

{ariefrahmawan@student.uns.ac.id¹, sarwijiswan@staff.uns.ac.id², sumarwati@staff.uns.ac.id³}

Sebelas Maret University
Ir. Sutami Sreet No. 36 Kentingan, Jebres, Semarang, Indonesia^{1,2,3}

Abstract. Serat Menak Lare tells the story of the figure of Amir Hamzah. This study aims to describe (1) beliefs and religious hegemony in Serat Menak Lare; (2) the relevance of Serat Menak Lare as a material for reading literacy of Indonesian language. The research method used is an anthropological literary study approach. The source of data in this study is taken from the book of Menak Lare I-IV by R. Ng. Yasadipura I which has been translated by Sulistijo H.S. The data collection technique used is intensive reading and note taking. The results of research show that religious hegemony is very strong in the spread of Islam. The spread of religion was carried out by invasion to the colonized countries. Furthermore, Serat Menak Lare is very relevant to be used as an alternative reading material in reading literacy activities of Indonesian language in senior high school.

Keywords: religious hegemony, Menak Lare, reading literacy

1 Introduction

A literature can be said as a record of the events of the society that surrounds it. Although literature is said to be a work of imaginative fiction, it can represent the author's mindset, a recording of the events that inspired the creation of the work, and a social portrait of the society when the literary work was created. Therefore, a literary work can be used as one of the documentation of an event in society. Literary work can reveal a portrait of events in society as a setting for certain events that have been captured and narrated by the author.

In relation to humans, a literary work can be examined with a literary anthropological approach. Anthropology can be divided into two parts, namely physical anthropology and cultural anthropology. In this regard, literature can be studied in cultural anthropology. It means that literature is studied in the context of copyrighted works produced by humans such as language, religious systems, myths, history, law, customs, art [12]. Literary work as a cultural product can reflect these things.

The characteristic of literary anthropology research is the understanding of literature in terms of cultural diversity [3]. Literary anthropology research is research that describes the behavior and attitudes of figures (characterization) in these literary works in order to reveal the culture of a particular society [13]. Literature is dissected and analyzed to reveal the potential for cultural diversity implied in the literary text. This literary anthropological research in the early 2000s is still considered a new interdisciplinary approach in the science of literature. Therefore, there have not been many studies that reveal literature in terms of cultural elements. Literary anthropology is said to be a new breakthrough that tries to break the deadlock of literary understanding in a monodisciplinary manner. This monodisciplinary understanding of literature lacks flexibility for people who are trying to research or appreciate a literary work.

One of the literary works that holds a wealth of cultural treasures is the epic story of Amir Hamzah. This story is interesting to study because it contains various recordings of anthropological events. In fact, this epic story has various variants of stories in various places. With this variant of the story in various places, Amir Hamzah's story contains many interesting cultural events to be revealed.

This heroic story inspired by the figure of Amir Hamzah, the uncle of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, is also very popular in Java. In Javanese literature, Hikayat Amir Hamzah is known as Serat Menak. The mention of his name is also vary. Amir Hamzah in Javanese literature is known as Amir Ambyah, Wong Agung Menak, Raden Ambyah, Wong Agung Jayeng Rana, Jayeng Murti, Wiradiningprang, Sang Menak Ambyah, and others. Although this epic story originated in the Land of Arabia, the nuances of local wisdom as a cultural product of the Javanese community are very strong. From the Serat Menak, it can be seen the expertise of Javanese poets in adapting the story based on the local Javanese colors.

In this study, the Menak story that is raised is the Menak Lare Story written by R. Ng. Yasadipura I, a poet of the Surakarta Palace. In the original script, this Menak story was written in Javanese script and in the form of tembang macapat. However, the object studied in this study is The Serat Menak Lare R. Ng. Yasadipura I which has been transliterated and translated by Sulistijo H.S. Sulistijo's translation becomes an object that will be studied with a literary anthropological approach, especially in the study of Gramsci's hegemony. This research study tries to reveal the hegemonic portrait of the spread of Islam contained in Serat Menak Lare.

The Serat Menak Lare translation's version of Sulistijo is interesting to be examined, one of which is in the aspect of recording the spread of Islam during the time of Amir Hamzah. In his story, religion has a strong hegemonic influence. The spread of Islam is told through wars and invasion attempts into countries. In addition, the values contained in it have the opportunity to become one of the reading materials in Indonesian reading literacy at the high school level. Therefore, this study aims to describe: (1) beliefs and religious hegemony in Serat Menak Lare; (2) the relevance of Serat Menak Lare as a material for reading literacy of Indonesian language.

2 Research Methods

This research is a descriptive qualitative research with an anthropological literary study approach, especially in the study of Gramsci's hegemony. The initial concept of Gramsci's Hegemony is a class and its members exercised power over the classes below it in a way of violence and persuasion (active or passive) [14]. Gramsci's concept of Hegemony contains two meanings, namely the basis of the consensus of a political system that exists in civil society and

the economic-corporative/hegemonic power relationship, the national populace, the passive revolution, the intellectual and moral revolution, common thought, civil society, the historical bloc, and the disposition of power [1]. The study of literary anthropology is an interdisciplinary study that examines literature with its relevance to humans [12].

The source of data in this study is the book *Menak Lare I-IV* by R. Ng. Yasadipura I which has been transliterated and translated by Sulistijo H.S. This book was first published by Balai Pustaka in 1982. The data collection technique used is intensive reading and note taking. Data is collected by reading the contents of the book carefully and taking the note. Furthermore, the sampling technique used is purposive sampling. It means the data captured or selected has a tendency. The tendency or purpose of data collection is only related to the problem under study. The data analysis technique used is the Miles and Huberman interactive analysis model. The data analysis steps are data condensation, data display, drawing, and verifying conclusions [8].

3 Result and Discussion

Serat Menak Lare, further abbreviated as SML, is one of the books from many versions of Menak's story that tells the figure of Wong Agung Menak or Amir Ambyah. The name Amir Hamzah has been very famous in the Malay Peninsula since the early 16th century, and continues to spread to the archipelago including Java. This story follows the spread of Islam to the archipelago. The story of his heroic bravery and heroism in fighting against non-Muslims is told in *Hikayat Amir Hamzah*. This heroic story is inspired by the figure of Amir Hamzah, the uncle of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. In Javanese literature, *Hikayat Amir Hamzah* is known as Serat Menak.

In its development, Menak's heroic epic story in Java underwent various transformations in form. Menak's story was first written in the form of *tembang macapat* as a storytelling media. In later developments, Menak's story was composed or adapted into various forms of presentation which made this story even more popular. In Javanese literature, Menak's story is raised in other forms, such as dance, *kethoprak*, as well as *wayang* performance.

Menak story originated in Persia. However, the Menak story series in Java itself is no less than 46 volumes. Some of them are *Menak Sarehas*, *Menak Lare*, *Menak Srandil*, *Menak Gandrung*, *Menak Kanin*, and others [2]. The story of Menak Lare was written by R. Ng. Yasadipura I, a poet of the Surakarta Palace. In the original script, this Menak story was written in Javanese script in the form of *tembang macapat*. *Serat Menak Lare* by R. Ng. Yasadipura I has been transliterated and translated by Sulistijo H.S.

Serat Menak Lare (SML) is divided into four volumes. In Javanese *Lare* means child, it contains the childhood story of Wong Agung Jayengrana or Amir Ambyah. Amir Ambyah was the son of Abdul Mutalib, an official nobleman in Mecca. In the first volume, he is shown as an Islamic mighty hero who is fought from one country to another to spread the Abrahamic religion, fight against infidel king, and conquest of the King of Yemen. The term "Menak" itself is a designation of a noble figure in the West Java and East Java regions.

The second volume contains the story of Amir Ambyah's youth who was able to defeat King Kohkarib. He also remained humble by still serving Prabu Nusirwan even though he was able to defeat him. The third volume contains the story of Amir Ambyah in the kingdom of Medayin

or the kingdom of Sang Prabu Nusirwan where is Prabu Nusirwan's daughter, Retna Muninggar fell in love with Amir Ambyah. In the last volume, it tells more about Amir Ambyah's love journey with Retna Muninggar. Despite this, the heroic story still dominates in this fourth volume.

Serat Menak Lare contains local wisdom and cultural values that are worth to be explored. Local wisdom values are a cultural value system owned by certain communities which are considered as a form of defense of incoming foreign cultures. It is also a characteristic marker of a certain cultural entity of the community. Local wisdom is cultural personality of a nation that causes the nation to be able to absorb, even process cultures that come from outside/other nations into their own dispositions and abilities [15]. Local wisdom is a view of life and science as well as various life strategies in the form of activities carried out by local communities in answering various problems in fulfillment [4]. It can be concluded that the value of local wisdom is a set of local cultural wealth that contains life policies; a way of life used by certain communities to process, accommodate, and adapt outside cultures.

Culture is something related to mind and human reason. Culture is a whole system of ideas and feelings, actions, and works produced by human in social life, which are made his own by learning. There are three forms of culture, namely (1) the form of culture as a complex of ideas, thoughts, values, norms, regulations and so on; (2) the form of culture as a complex of activities and patterned actions of humans in society; (3) the form of culture as objects of human work. Culture belongs only to human society. Culture is not derived biologically, but is acquired through the process of learning [7]. Culture is obtained, supported, and passed on by humans as members of society [9]. Thus, culture as the result of human mind always changes in line with the process of human life in society.

In SML, readers can find out the recording of Javanese local culture and wisdom. The visible form of culture is Arabic culture which is adapted and aculturated to the story or setting of the event with local culture. These forms of local wisdom include the adaptation of the name and setting of the place. The names in the stories and the name of the region or the background of the place of events are adapted to the conditions in Javanese society.

Furthermore, the nuances of religious hegemony and the pattern of the spread of Islam are also visible in the SML text. As stated in the previous section, Serat Menak Lare as an epic promotes efforts to spread Islam. Amir Hamzah was the uncle of the Prophet Muhammad who was powerful and participated in the war to spread Islam. The entire kingdom that was defeated by the Amir Hamzah must obey and they were forced to embrace Islam if they want to live. In several passages it is stated that Amir Hamzah invites to embrace the religion inherited from the Prophet Ibrahim and perform prayers by means of war. Amir Hamzah plays an important role as a dominant figure who seeks to maintain the hegemony of the religion he believes in, namely Islam. The pattern of the spread of religion is as contained in one of the following quotations.

From the events and experiences that Amir and Umarmaya encountered in the wanderings, it became clear how powerful Amir Ambyah was and how ingenious Umarmaya was, and this will be even more evident in their subsequent wanderings, in their relentless journey to conquer the country, transferring the king and his people to the religion of the Prophet Ibrahim, and uniting his conquered nations. (SML I, pp 12)

*"Enter Islam, circumcision and follow my religion. " The two have already agreed.
"Likewise, wadyamu, don't miss everything follow the teachings of Prophet
Ibrahim. (SML IV, pp 70)*

In Gramsci's thinking, there are two major topics that are promoted in hegemony, namely the expansion of the political definition of governmental activity and the analysis of social institutions from various classes to the realm of civil society and institutions [6]. Based on Gramsci's thought and the quotation above, Amir Hamzah occupies a dominant position on the topic of expanding political and religious definitions. The starting point of Gramsci's analysis of the birth of hegemony is the existence of consensus. Consensus can occur due to three factors, namely the fear factor, because of familiarity, because of awareness and agreement. In the context of the SML story, religious hegemony is seen as power that originates because of fear, or coercion.

In the SML book, there are at least three categories of figures as a result of patterns of dissemination and religious hegemony. The three categories are figures who are religious because of compulsion, figures who are religious because they are voluntary, and figures who do not want to obey to the religious hegemony spread by Amir Hamzah. The figures in the first category are King Kistaham and his son, Raden Kobat. These two figures are described as trying not to submit and maintain the hegemony of power in Medayin State as warlords. Both did not accept that their positions were shifted by Amir Hamzah (SML III, pp 145). They always tried to bring down Amir Hamzah but always failed. The second category of figures is King Maktal, King of Yemen. King Maktal admits defeat and diverse Islam and voluntarily claims to be a younger brother to Amir Hamzah (SML I, pp 221-222). Similarly, the King of Yemen (SML I, pp 236) voluntarily changed religion and regarded Amir Hamzah as a son. There was also King Kohkarib who initially defended his state and religion was subject to Amir Hamzah (SML II, pp 163-164).

The third category is Prabu Alkamah who became King in Kebar. This figure was said to be reluctant to follow the religion of Amir Hamzah until he died because he did not want to submit to the Amir (SML IV, pp 17). Based on these data, it can be concluded that Amir Hamzah's position is very strong in his power and influential in the pattern of spreading Islam. The pattern of spreading religion based on the story in Serat Menak Lara is carried out by war and the conquest of its rulers. If the conquered kings were to conquer and convert to Islam, he would be given salvation and united under the leadership of King Medayin, Amir Hamzah's father-in-law.

The pattern of spreading religion and power if only achieved by relying on coercive power, the real result achieved is called dominative. The stability and security of the colonized country became manifested. There was no resistance from the colonized people because of powerlessness. If this coercion continues with efforts to preserve power and domination with intellectual leadership, the end result is known as hegemony [5]. Therefore, efforts to dominate the ruling group or social class can be carried out in two ways, namely domination or suppression and intellectual and moral leadership.

In 2018, the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) asked 15-year-olds about the length of time they have used the internet. The result is surprising, which is up 66% from 2012 [10]. This can be interpreted to mean that the activities of 15-year-olds are more active in using the internet. They will often intersect with reading material on the internet. However, this is sometimes not balanced with adequate literacy. Therefore, 21st century reading literacy skills should be directed towards the ability to construct and validate knowledge.

PISA's last release in 2018 about Indonesian children's reading ability is still far from expectations. The results of the PISA study released by the OECD showed that Indonesian children's ability to read only achieved an average score of 371 below the average OECD score of 487. Based on this data, it ranks Indonesia 74th out of 79 countries. This figure was reached by Indonesia in 2000. In the period after 2000, Indonesia actually experienced an increase. However, the trend has continued to decline since 2009. Thus, it can be said that Indonesia's literacy rate needs serious attention [11].

In the 2018 PISA results, 30% of Indonesian students achieved at least a level of reading proficiency at level 2. In fact, the OECD average has reached 77%. At this number, Indonesian students can already identify the main idea in the text of medium length, find explicit information, and can reflect on the purpose and form of the text content. Thus, it can be said that the reading literacy ability of Indonesian students is still at a low level. Students have not been able to understand the content of the text at a high level. Therefore, adequate literacy strategies and materials are needed to improve reading literacy skills.

In accordance with this research, Serat Menak Lare free translation of Sulistijo HS on the composition of R. Ng. Yasadipura I from the story of Amir Hamzah is an interesting story work to be studied and explored as the nation's cultural heritage. In the story, good values can be taken and then passed on to students. Serat Menak Lare can be deconstructed and reconstructed as material for reading literacy of students at the high school level. Serat Menak Lare is very relevant to be used as an object of literary study in schools, especially high schools because of the complexity of the language used and the content in it. This four-volume book is very worthy of being dissected and studied by students at the high school level or equivalent.

There are at least two important reasons Serat Menak Lare can be used as an Indonesian reading literacy material. First, Serat Menak Lare contains noble values and local culture that should be explored by students. Serat Menak Lare can be used as literacy material in the Socio-Cultural context for the content of literary texts. Second, Serat Menak Lare has a complexity of content that can be used to stimulate students to think critically. Stories in Serat Menak Lare can be used as reading material and development of reading literacy assessments Indonesian.

4 Conclusion

Based on the description of the results and discussion, it can be concluded that (1) Islamic religious hegemony is very strong in the spread of religion. The pattern of spreading religion was carried out in a way of invasions of countries. Subsequently, the conquered country was asked to convert and be united under the leadership of King Medayin. Based on this, religious hegemony and power originated from coercion and subsequently efforts were made to maintain through the intellectual leadership of its central figure, namely Amir Hamzah. (2) Serat Menak Lare is very relevant to be used as an alternative material for Indonesian reading literacy at the high school level. Serat Menak Lare contains local wisdom values that can be used for literacy materials on the content of literary texts in a socio-cultural context. In addition, Serat Menak Lare has a complexity of content and language that is suitable for the age of high school children.

Therefore, it is highly recommended for teachers to be able to use Serat Menak Lare volumes I-IV as one of the teaching materials or reading literacy materials. Students are expected to be able to explore the values of local wisdom and the philosophy of life of the ancient Javanese

people. Learners can also imitate and adapt educational values that are still relevant to be used as a lifeline.

References

- [1] Adamson, Walter L. *Hegemony and Revolution: Antonio Gramsci's political and cultural theory*. California: University of California Press, Ltd. Pp.170-171. (1980)
- [2] Depdikbud. *Menak Lare I, II, III, IV by R. Ng. Yasadipura I. Changed Script and Translated by Sulistijo HS*. Jakarta: Proyek Penerbitan Buku Sastra Indonesia dan Daerah. (1983).
- [3] Endraswara, Suwardi. *Metodologi Penelitian Antropologi Sastra*. Yogyakarta: Penerbit Ombak. pp 23 (2013)
- [4] Fajarini, Ulfah. "Peranan Kearifan Lokal dalam Pendidikan Karakter". *Jurnal of Sosio Didaktika*. ISSN: 2442-9430 Volume 1 Nomor 2, pp 123-130 (2014)
- [5] Hanan, Abd dan Abdillah, Kudrat. "Hegemoni Relegio-Kekuasaan dan Transformasi Sosial". *Journal of Sosial Budaya*. ISSN: 2407-1684 Vol. 16, No. 1. pp 13 (2019).
- [6] Ives, Peter. *Language and hegemony in Gramsci*. London: Pluto Press. pp 70-71 (2004).
- [7] Koentjaraningrat. *Pengantar Ilmu Antropologi*. Jakarta: Rineka Cipta. pp 150 (2009)
- [8] Miles, Matthew B., Huberman, A. Michael, and Saldaña, Johnny. *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook Fourt Edition*. California: SAGE Publications, Inc. pp. 8-10. (2020)
- [9] Nurmansyah, Gunsu, Nunung Rodhliyah, dan Recca Ayu Hapsari. *Pengantar Antropologi: Sebuah Ikhtisar Mengenal Antropologi*. Bandar Lampung: CV Anugrah Utama Raharja. pp 75 (2019)
- [10] OECD. *21st-Century Readers: Developing Literacy Skills in a Digital World, PISA*, Paris: OECD Publishing, pp 20 (2021).
- [11] OECD. *Results Indonesia From PISA 2018*. Available on https://www.oecd.org/pisa/publications/PISA2018_CN_IDN.pdf (Accessed on 11 December 2022) pp 2 (2018)
- [12] Ratna, Nyoman Kutha. *Teori, Metode, dan Teknik Penelitian Sastra dari Strukturalisme hingga Poststrukturalisme Perspektif Wacana Naratif*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar. pp 351-353 (2015)
- [13] Sitanggang, Jenni Marlina. "Kajian Antropologi Sastra dalam Novel Kau, Aku, dan Sepucuk Angpau Merah". *Jurnal Serunai Bahasa Indonesia*. ISSN: 26215616 Vol 18, No. 2, Oktober 2021 pp 80-86 (2021)
- [14] Thomas, Peter D. *The Gramscian Moment: Philosophy, Hegemony, and Marxism*. Leiden: Brill. pp 160-161(2009).
- [15] Wibowo, Agus dan Gunawan. *Pendidikan Karakter Berbasis Kearifan Lokal di Sekolah*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar. pp 17 (2015)

