

SPIRITUAL VALUES IN PRE-ISLAMIC ARABIC LITERATURE

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Abstract

Poetry is an accumulation of beauty and imagination in the form of compositions that represent the subtlety of feelings and have messages that penetrate the recesses of the soul. Although the poetry comes from a time when there was not yet has a light of divine truth, there has been poetry with spiritual values touching the spiritual experiences. Therefore, this study aims to examine poetry that has spiritual value in pre-Islamic Arabic literature. Content-analysis is applied to find the spiritual values in a selected poetry. The result shows that spiritual values emerged such as kindness and compassion for others; generosity; deep thoughts about death; peacefulness; keeping promise; sincerity.

Keywords: Spiritual, Poetry, Jahiliyyah, Hikmah (Wisdom)

Abstrak

Syair merupakan akumulasi dari keindahan dan daya khayal yang berbentuk gubahan yang mewakili kehalusan perasaan dan memiliki pesan-pesan yang menembus relung-relung jiwa. Meskipun syair itu berasal dari suatu masa yang belum disinari oleh cahaya kebenaran ilahiyah, namun ada syair dengan nilai-nilai spiritual yang bersentuhan dengan pengalaman-pengalaman batiniah. Oleh karena itu penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menelaah syair yang memiliki nilai spiritual dalam kesusasteraan Arab pra Islam. Analisis isi diterapkan untuk menemukan nilai-nilai spiritual dalam salah satu puisi yang terpilih. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa nilai-nilai spiritual yang muncul seperti kebaikan dan kasih sayang untuk orang lain; kemurahan hati; pemikiran mendalam tentang kematian; kedamaian; menepati janji; ketulusan.

Kata Kunci: Spiritual, Syair, Jahiliyyah, Hikmah

A. Introduction

Spiritual, refers to the higher faculties (mental, intellectual, aesthetic, religious) and values of the mind; also refers to non-material human values such as beauty, kindness, love, truth, warmth, honesty and chastity; and refers to moral, religious, and aesthetic feelings.¹

In general, "spiritual" is focused on values which are the scope of mental, intellectual, aesthetic and religious abilities, as well as universal values such as beauty, kindness, love, truth, compassion, honesty and purity. Sometimes, the values included in the "spiritual" definition above emerge from the depths of the messages contained in the poems in pre-Islamic times. One of them is a poem with the theme of *hikmah* (wisdom), which comes from *mu'allaqat*² of Zuhair Ibn Abi Sulma, a poet who lived during the Jahiliyyah period.

Based on this view, the problem that arises is how spiritual values can be contained in Zuhair Ibn Abi Sulma's poem with the theme of wisdom (*hikmah*), even though the poet and his works are from the jahiliyyah period. To find the answer, this research will be directed at an effort to reveal the "spiritual" values contained in the poem of Zuhair Ibn Abi Sulma, especially those with the theme of wisdom (*hikmah*). This is completed through a discussion mechanism that will begin with the life of the poet, the themes of his poetry, as well as the disclosure of spiritual values in the poetry of wisdom (*hikmah*), which is then ended with a conclusion.

B. Discussion

About Zuhair Ibn Abi Sulma At A Glance

Zuhair was born and raised in Hajir, his family is neighbour with Bani Murrah from Zubyan, from the Muzainah tribe. His father, Abu Sulma, whose full name is Rabi'ah Ibn Riyah Ibn Qurrah Ibn al-Haris, is from Bani Muzainah, from Mudhar.

¹ Tim Penulis Rosda, *Kamus Filsafat*, (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 1995), h. 320-321.

² Mu'allaqat are selected poems or qasidah which are written in gold ink and hung on the walls of the Ka'bah after going through a rigorous selection process.

When Zuhair's father died, his uncle Basyamah Ibn Ghadir took over the responsibility of caring for Zuhair. Basyamah was someone who had a lot of wealth, so that when he died, Zuhair also got a share of the wealth. Furthermore, Zuhair remained in Hajir until the time of his decease in the 13th year before Hijri.³

Regarding the tribe where Zuhair came from, there are those who think that Zuhair is from the Ghuthfan tribe. During the Jahiliyyah period, the Muzainah tribe is neighbor with the Ghuthfan tribe. oth During the Jahiliyyah period, the Muzainah tribe, neighbors with the Ghuthfan tribe, participated in this tribe, the Banu Murrah Ibn Auf Ibn Sa'ad Ibn Zubyan, who was a relative of his father Rabi'ah. Other tribe who is participated in this tribe, the Banu Murrah Ibn Auf Ibn Sa'ad Ibn Zubyan, who was a relative of his father Rabi'ah. It is narrated that Zuhair's father and mother stayed for some time with the Ghuthfan tribe, until Zuhair was born.⁴ Based on this, it can be concluded that basically in terms of lineage, Zuhair comes from Muzainah, while based on the phase of his growth in the Ghuthfan tribe.

There are still other interesting things about the life of the poet who is nicknamed "hakim al-syu'ara" (judge of poets). He was in the care of his uncle, Basyamah, also a poet who had a lot of wealth. At the time of his death, Basyamah distributed his wealth, including for Zuhair. It is also narrated, Basyamah said to Zuhair: "Indeed I give you something more valuable than wealth", Zuhair asked: "what is it"? Basyamah replied: "My poetry".⁵ But basically Zuhair did not only inherit poetry and wealth, but also he even inherited Basyamah's noble character, and this is clearly illustrated in his works.

As for his married life, it was narrated that Zuhair married 2 (two) women. The first, Umm Afa, who is often mentioned in her poems, but the relationship between the two of them does not last forever. Zuhair divorced her after she gave birth to Zuhair's children, all of whom died. After that Zuhair married Kabsyah Binti

³ Nabilah Lubis, *Al-Mu'in fi al-Adab al-'Arabi wa Tarikhihi*, (Jakarta: FAH UIN Jakarta, 2005), h. 39.

⁴ Syauqi Dhaifi, *Tarikh al-Adab al-'Arabi: al-'Ashr al-Jahiliy*, (Mesir: Dar al-Ma'arif, t.t), h. 300.

⁵ *Ibid.*, h. 302.

'Ammar al-Ghathfaniyyah, this woman became the mother of Zuhair's children: Ka'ab, Bujair and Salim. But Salim died, and Zuhair mourned him in some of his poems.⁶

With regard to his life as a poet, Zuhair has other advantages that other poets do not have, namely his father is a poet, as well as his uncle, his sister Salma, his two sons Ka'ab and Bujair, his other sister al-Khansa', and his grandson Al-Mudharrab Ibn Ka'ab, all of them were poets.⁷ It is an undeniable fact that the Zuhair family is a family of poets.

Theme Of Zuhair Ibn Abi Sulma's Poetry

The poems composed by Zuhair cannot be separated from the actual themes at that time. In pre-Islamic Arabia, the themes of poetry revolved around al-madah, al-hija', al-ritsa, al-fakhr, al-washf, al-ghazal, al-I'tizhar and al-hikmah.⁸

1. Al-Madah, namely the theme of the poem that contains praise to someone, especially with regard to noble character, such as courage, helping people in need, forgiving and helping neighbors. In the jahiliyyah era, this theme occupied the highest percentage, because it could be used to earn a living by praising the rulers of that era.
2. Al-Hija ', a theme of poetry that contains hatred, anger, or the poet's dislike of someone, by mentioning the ugliness that exists in a person or in a certain tribe, so it can be said that this theme is the opposite of the al-madah theme.
3. Al-Ritsa', the theme of the poem that contains a person's feelings of sadness, despair and pain. This theme is motivated by the poet's sense

⁶ *Ibid.*, h. 302.

⁷ Mustafa Shadiq al-Rafi'i, *Tarikh Adab al-'Arabi*, Jil. 3, (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2000), h. 181.

⁸ Abdul Aziz bin Muhammad Faisal, *al-Adab al-'Arabi wa Tarikhuhu*, (Saudi Arabia: Jami'ah Imam Ibn Su'ud al-Islamiyyah, 1406 H), p. 60-68; Lihat juga Males Sutiasumarga, *Kesusastraan Arab: Asal Mula dan Perkembangannya*, (Jakarta: Zikrul Hakim, 2001), h. 33-37.

of loss due to the death of his loved ones, such as children, siblings or parents.

4. Al-Fakhr, the theme of the poem that boasts of the greatness possessed by the poet or his tribe, such as having courage, noble character, helping people in need, and other good qualities.
5. Al-Washf, is the theme of the poem that describes the natural conditions around the poet, for example when he travels on a camel, he will describe the vast desert, the scorching heat of the sun that causes a mirage, also about the cold night. The poet will also describe about the horse and its equipment, when he travels by horse.
6. Al-Ghazal, the theme of the poem that talks about women and the poet describes what he sees in women, such as face, eyes, body and so on.
7. Al-I'tizhar, the theme of the poem which contains a request for mercy to be forgiven, for the mistakes of the poet's past words, accompanied by a sense of regret from the poet.
8. Hikmah (wisdom), the theme of poetry resulting from life experiences based on various events that have been passed, and only spoken by people who have long experienced in life. Hikmah, in contrast to the ghazal spoken by the poet in his youth. Hikmah has an influence on the soul, poets are often famous for their verses that have good hikmah (wisdom) so that other people memorize and transfer it, and as a result, the qashidah or the poet's poetry becomes famous because of that wisdom. Whereas basically, hikmah (wisdom) is not the goal of the poem itself, but it is only one of the themes that appear in the poem.

Hikmah And Its Characteristics

As a rule, a long Arabic qasidah, which includes various themes of poetry, begins with the ghazal then the poet continues by describing the desert followed by

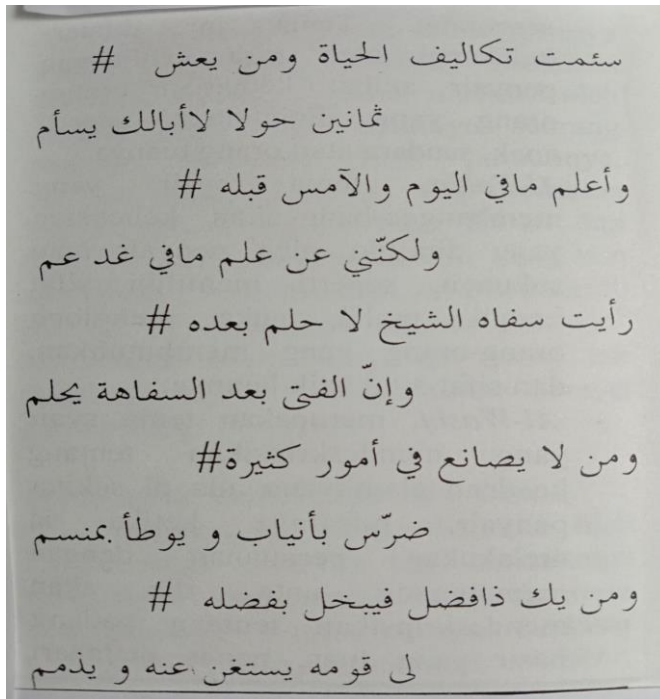
describing his camel, then he enters into the purpose of compiling his qasidah, whether it can be fakhr, hamasah, madah, ritsa' or I'tizhar. Then the poet raises the theme of hikmah (wisdom) before the closing of his qasidah, but the poet does not specify one part of the qashidah for the theme of hikmah (wisdom).⁹

Zuhair's poem with the theme of hikmah (wisdom), started from Zuhair's observation of the peace event that occurred between the 'Abbas and Zubyan tribes. He wanted to take lessons (hikmah) from two wise men who had a role in the peace process, namely Harith bin 'Auf and Haram bin Sinan. Before the peace occurred, there was a dispute between 'Abbas and Zubyan which was triggered by the death of Haram bin Dhamdham al-Muri whom was murdered by Warad bin Habib al-'Abbasi. Therefore, Hushain bin Dhamdham swore that he would not wash his head until he could kill Warad bin Habib or one of the Bani 'Abbas, then from the Bani Ghalib. Before he met one of them, then al-Harith bin 'Auf bin Abi Harithah sent a guarantee, then the envoy met with Hushain bin Dhamdham. Hushain also asked the messenger about his origin, just as the messenger mentioned his lineage from Bani 'Abbas to Bani Ghalib, Hushain immediately killed him. This incident reached Harith bin 'Auf and Haram bin Sinan, their reaction was getting tougher. This news also reached the Banu 'Abbas, and they went to meet al-Harith, when they arrived and their attitude became even more severe because of the killing of their friend, along with their strong desire to kill al-Harith. So al-Harith also sent for them 100 camels accompanied by his son. He made an offer for them, either to choose camels or to kill his son in exchange for the killing of one of their friends. In the end, the Banu 'Abbas chose the camels and agreed to make peace.

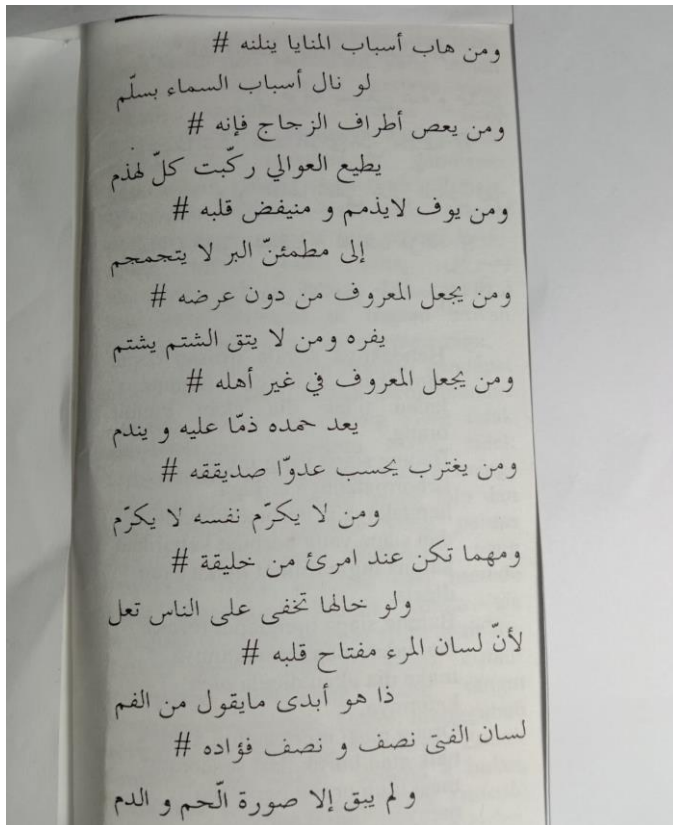
Based on this incident, Zuhair composed verses of poetry containing praises to the two wise men, taking lessons from the efforts made by the two men to bring about peace. The following are the image of Zuhair's verses of poetry in the hikmah

⁹ Abdul Aziz bin Muhammad Faisal, *al-Adab ...*, h. 60.

(wisdom) theme derived from Zuhair's mu'allaqat pieces as follows:¹⁰



¹⁰ Nur Chalis Sofyan, *Sastra Arab Sebuah Pengantar*, (Banda Aceh: Ar-Raniry Press, 2004), h. 69-70.



As quoted by the researcher from Nur Chalis Sofyan, the poem contains the poet's story about: (1) he was tired of his troubled eighty years of life; (2) people do not know what will happen tomorrow, all they know is what happened yesterday; (3) if he interacts with foolish youths, it is possible to teach him, but if he interacts with ignorant old man there is no possibility of teaching him; (4) should all affairs be felt by humans in general, otherwise he will be scorned; (5) whoever gets sustenance and does not donate it, then he will be reproached by his people; (6) whoever fears death will find it one day, even though he ascends to the sky; (7) whoever hinders the peace will be fought and feels his body will be destroyed; (8) whoever keeps his promise will not be blamed, and whoever has a sincere heart then he will not hesitate to practice peace; (9) whoever wants his honor to be preserved should do good, and whoever does good because he wants to be seen will be reproached; (10) Whoever does good to the evil one he will reap reproach; (11) whoever isolates himself then considers his enemy as a friend for him, whoever does not honor himself will

certainly not be respected; (12) people will know the good or bad character of a person, even though people try to hide it; (13) because speech will reveal what is in the heart, so when someone speaks, people know everything from it; (14) The words of a young man or a person are a reflection of him, if there is no such thing then all that is left is a lump of flesh and blood.¹¹

The poetry with the hikmah theme is a piece of Zuhair's *mu'allaqat* in the form of a long *qasidah*. The *qasidah* tells a terrible war that occurred between the tribe of 'Abbas and the tribe of Zubyan because of a horse racing competition. The war lasted for decades, known as the Dahis and Ghubara War, the name comes from the names of the two horses that were competed in the race.¹² The war ended peacefully. In the peace process, two people were sent to represent their respective tribes to make peace, namely Haram Ibn Sinan and al-Harith Ibn Auf. Both parties agreed to pay *diyat* for those entitled to receive it. It is narrated that as many as 3000 camels were provided to pay *diyat* for three years. So Zuhair made a *madah* poetry in which the names of Haram Ibn Sinan and al-Harith Ibn Auf were involved in the peace process.¹³ Then Zuhair closed the *qasidah* containing the *madah* with *hikmah*, so that Zuhair's expression appeared which resembled the words of the Prophets,¹⁴ because it specializes what is told in his poetry into *hikmah* that describes political and social life. Basically, it is through his poetry verses with the *hikmah* theme can also be seen that he has delivered political and philosophical elements through the themes of his poetry.

The Spiritual Values in Zuhair's Poetry

Based on the poetry with the *hikmah* theme, it can be seen the characteristics

¹¹ *Ibid.*, h. 70-71.

¹² Abdul Aziz bin Muhammad Faisal, *al-Adab ...*, h. 88.

¹³ Syauqi Dhaifi, *Tarikh ...*, h. 302.

¹⁴ Mustafa Shadiq al-Rafi'i, *Tarikh ...*h. 183.

depicted in that poetry. The poetry verse is more concerned with the correct *lahjah*¹⁵, avoiding foreign and unclear words, far from weak and unkind words, in its little pronunciation accumulated the profound meaning. Basically, such characteristics are the overall picture of Zuhair's poetry. Even though there are difficult words, they are used sparingly.

This is in line with the opinion of Umar Ibn Khattab when commenting on Zuhair: "Zuhair is someone who does not utter foreign words, does not complicate pronunciation, only speaks what others know and only praises those who deserve to be praised."¹⁶ The choice of words is inseparable from the method used by Zuhair when he composes the poetry, whatever the poetry theme is. In this regard, the figure of Zuhair is someone who is very serious. When he compiled poetry, he did it for 4 months, then edited it (*tahzib*) for 4 months, and then he explained the poetry to certain poets also for 4 months. In the end, other people can only recite his poetry compositions after a period of one year (*haul*). Therefore, Zuhair's *qasidah* is known as *hauliiyyat*.¹⁷ In fact, he is known to have compiled as many as 7 *qasidah hauliiyyat*.¹⁸

By referring to the spiritual values boundaries that have been described previously, observations will be made on the verses of Zuhair's poetry with the *hikmah* theme that have been conveyed earlier. Universally, based on the explanation of the poetry verses that have been conveyed previously, it can be seen that Zuhair's poetry contain thoughts that are emerged from his experiences and views on human life. A thought based on society which is not something new. He is skilled in bringing out what humans feel in their various experiences, so that his thoughts are in accordance with reality.

Zuhair saw that human would definitely feel bored when he was eighty years old. Just as humans only know what has happened, but do not know what will

¹⁵ *lahjah* is a dialect or accent pronunciation of the language that is commonly used by the local community.

¹⁶ Abdul Aziz bin Muhammad Faisal, *al-Adab ...*, h. 151.

¹⁷ Ahmad Hasan al-Ziyat, *Tarikh al-Adab al-'Arabi*, (Mesir: Dar al-Nahdhah, tt), h. 53.

¹⁸ Syauqi Dhaifi, *Tarikh ...*,h. 327.

happen. In the fourth and fifth stanzas he alludes to kindness and compassion for others, as well as about a business that is beneficial for society at large, including about the nature of generosity to a person in which both of these things, kindness and compassion for others are aspects of morality which all lead to spiritual matters.

Zuhair's spiritual message is very clear in the 6th stanza, in the stanza Zuhair's deep thoughts about death are seen, an event that will surely be experienced by humans, even though humans try their best to avoid it, these are undeniable truth values and contain the poet's religious emotions. Followed by the next stanza that calls for peace and ends warfare, this is a call to the value of kindness and love for fellow human beings. In this stanza Zuhair actually wants to say whoever is reluctant to make peace, surely he will face war, but he does not mention it directly, but he intelligently begins to talk about a picture that resembles peace among them. In the 8th stanza, there is an illustration that the poet highly upholds the values of honesty, which is described in his verse with the image of a person who keeps his promise and has a sincere heart.

As for the 9th to 14th stanzas, the poet describes in its entirety the values of honor, kindness, which are reflected by good morals, and through every word spoken by someone.

Thus, there is no doubt that Zuhair is someone who is proficient in language, and in gathering good words as well as stringing word for word so that it will be in a good sequence. Just as he can harmonize beautifully with various expressions, so can he do with the rhythm.

C. Conclusion

There are several important points from the discussion above that can be used as a reference in finding answers to the process behind the emerging of spiritual values in Zuhair's poetry with the *hikmah* theme.

The background that cannot be ignored is the life of Zuhair with his father's

relative, Basyamah Ibn Ghadir. He is someone who is known to be very strong in his opinion, so that many of his people ask for his opinion. He is also wise and has good poetry, where in the future before his death, Basyamah bequeathed his poetry to Zuhair, thus having an influence on Zuhair, both in terms of poetry, knowledge, and morality.

Another thing that can be used as a reference is in terms of methods. In relation to the method used by Zuhair when he composes poetry, it is not surprising that his poetry with the *hikmah* theme can contain spiritual values. Zuhair's skill in composing words is very clear, and he is very careful when choosing the words he uses. So it can be said that when he composes words, he does so by respecting the readers through the use of words that are not strange.

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