

Refleksi

JURNAL KAJIAN AGAMA DAN FILSAFAT

“Relasi Teks Keagamaan dengan Realitas Lokal”

WACANA

Achmad Ubaedillah

**Takwil Tradition in Malay Literary Works:
Islamic Spiritual Insights in Danarto’s
Nostalgia**

M. Ikhsan Tangkok

**The Cult of the Dead in Chinese-Hakka
Family and Society in Singkawang-West
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BOOK REVIEW

Edwin Syarif

Intuisi Bagi Dunia Modern

TULISAN LEPAS

Nawiruddin

Masyarakat Madani: Sebuah Keniscayaan

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Pemilihan Presiden dalam Islam

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RELASI TEKS KEAGAMAAN DENGAN REALITAS LOKAL

Perkembangan sosial tidak selalu selanggam dengan kehendak agama, begitu pun sebaliknya. Itulah sebabnya dialog dan komunikasi menjadi tak terelakkan untuk kepentingan eksistensi masing-masing entitas, baik entitas agama maupun sosial. Dialog dan komunikasi menjadi penting pula karena setiap realitas memiliki ciri lokalitasnya yang menjadi pembatas dari realitas-realitas lainnya. Itulah sebabnya tafsir atas agama dan teks-teks sosial lainnya tidak bisa dilepaskan dari konteks lokalitasnya. Agama pun hadir melalui media lokal dengan misi universal.

Refleksi kali ini menurunkan wacana seputar dekonstruksi teks sosial keagamaan dengan melihat keunikan lokalitasnya. Lokalitas di sini di samping mengacu pada konteks wilayah, juga dalam konteks interpretasi teks-teks keagamaan dalam langgam yang khas dan lokal. Seperti tulisan Achmad Ubaedillah yang menelaah ekspresi spiritualitas seorang seniman kenamaan, Danarto, yang memakai medium lokal. Tidak seperti kebanyakan seniman muslim lainnya yang memakai medium keislaman universal, Danarto menuangkan pengembaraan spiritualitasnya melalui simbol-simbol Hindu-Jawa. Hal ini terlihat jelas dalam karyanya berjudul “Nostalgia” yang memakai tokoh-tokoh Hindu seperti Mahabharata, Arjuna, Kresna, Bisma, dan Abimanyu. Ini tidak lepas dari pengaruh sosial-budaya Jawa yang telah ikut membentuk Danarto.

Fenomena lain yang menunjukkan realitas lokal keagamaan adalah upacara kematian masyarakat Cina (keluarga Hakka) Singkawang yang memiliki peran yang sangat signifikan. Seperti ditulis oleh M. Ikhsan Tanggok bahwa signifikansi upacara kematian tersebut tidak hanya terkait dengan emosi keagamaan, tetapi juga menjadi momen pertemuan keluarga untuk membicarakan masalah ekonomi maupun politik. Ia juga berfungsi sebagai mediator antara keluarga sebagai penyembah dengan yang meninggal atau nenek moyang sebagai yang disembah. Dengan ritual, keluarga yang masih hidup dapat membangun relasi dengan cara mengirimkan doa untuk nenek moyangnya dan meminta bantuan keselamatan bagi kehidupannya di dunia nyata.

Telaah fenomena sosial dalam konteks realitas lokal terlihat dalam analisa yang disajikan oleh Ahmad Abrori. Ia melihat relasi tradisi lokal dengan kemungkinan perwujudan *civil society*. Dengan mengambil kasus jawara Banten, tulisan ini mengupas dominasi jawara Banten (yang berakar pada tradisi lokal) terhadap perangkat-perangkat modern semisal birokrasi, organisasi massa, partai politik dan lembaga berorientasi bisnis. Sebagai kajian sosiologi-politik, studi ini mengungkap bagaimana peran jawara dalam berusaha memperoleh dan mempertahankan dominasinya di daerah Banten. Dengan menebar semboyan “Bela Diri Bela Bangsa Bela Negara” kepada masyarakat, mereka ingin menggambarkan tentang pengetahuan, keyakinan, dan sistem nilai yang mereka anut yang menjadi referensi bagi perilaku mereka di masyarakat. Dalam kacamata *civil society* (masyarakat madani) kenyataan tersebut merupakan potret buram yang bisa menenggelamkan nasib *civil society* itu sendiri.

Sikap dan ekspresi keberagamaan tidak bisa dilepaskan dari metode penafsiran terhadap teks-teks keagamaan. Lebih spesifik lagi, penafsiran itu diwarnai oleh sosok sang mufasir sendiri. Oleh sebab itu, untuk memahami model penafsiran bisa juga dilacak melalui pemahaman terhadap sang mufasir. Dari sana akan ditemukan latar belakang corak keilmuannya sehingga memunculkan warna tafsir tertentu. Itulah yang ditulis oleh Lilik Umami Kaltsum dalam menelaah sosok al-Jashshāsh pengarang kitab *Aḥkām Al-Qur’ān*. Menurut Lilik, al-Jashshāsh berupaya memasukkan paham-paham mazhabnya, mazhab Hanafi, pada ayat-ayat yang dibahas sehingga penafsirannya meluas dan melebar dari ayat pokok bahasan serta terkesan sebagai kitab fikih Hanafiyah.

Cara lain untuk memahami teks keagamaan adalah melalui pemahaman latar belakang pewahyuannya. Ulasan ini ditulis oleh Rifqi Muhammad Fatkhi yang menelaah al-Qur’an sebagai media tekstual ketuhanan yang pewahyuannya terkait dengan konteks historis. Klaim tentang al-Qur’an sebagai teks yang universal yang relevan sepanjang zaman (*shāliḥ li kulli zamān wa makān*) patut dipertahankan secara rasional. Oleh karena itu, agar al-Qur’an mampu menyapa setiap pembacanya secara kontekstual, maka diperlukan telaah terhadap latar belakang sosial (konteks historis) al-Qur’an, yang dalam skala mikro dikenal dengan istilah *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*.

Refleksi kali ini juga menurunkan dua tulisan yang terkait dengan fenomena politik kontemporer. Ada dua telaah yang mengupas fenomena

kontekstual, yaitu tentang *civil society* dan pemilihan presiden, dengan melacak benang merahnya pada khazanah klasik. Tulisan Nawiruddin mengkaji relasi *civil society* sebagai sebuah keniscayaan dalam kehidupan yang demokratis dengan konsepsi-konsepsi Islam masa lalu. Menurutnya masyarakat madani merupakan suatu masyarakat yang otonom yang mampu mengimbangi kesewenang-wenangan elite yang mendominasi kekuasaan negara. Oleh karena itu, keberadaan masyarakat madani atau *civil society* merupakan sebuah keniscayaan atau *condition sine quo non* bagi sebuah negara demokratis. Demokrasi dan masyarakat madani atau *civil society* merupakan dua entitas yang korelatif. Demokrasi hanya bisa tegak dalam masyarakat madani dan masyarakat madani tidak mungkin terwujud dalam masyarakat yang tidak demokratis. Di dalam masyarakat madani terdapat nilai-nilai yang menjunjung tinggi persamaan, keadilan, melindungi dan menghormati hak-hak warga negara, baik hak-hak politik, sosial, ekonomi, maupun budaya. Hal inilah yang tercermin dalam masyarakat Madinah yang dibangun oleh Rasulullah.

Sejatinya agama menawarkan banyak konsep yang bisa diterapkan dalam berbagai level kehidupan, termasuk kehidupan politik. Dalam konteks ini Agus Nugraha menyajikan telaah khazanah pemikiran Islam terkait dengan pemilihan presiden dalam Islam. Kontekstualitas tulisan ini terletak pada eksistensi masyarakat Indonesia sebagai penduduk muslim terbesar di dunia yang untuk pertama kalinya melaksanakan pemilihan presiden secara langsung pada Pemilu 2004. Hal ini tentu akan menjadi referensi bagi negeri-negeri muslim lainnya dalam memilih pemimpinnya. Dalam konteks ajaran Islam, pemilihan presiden bisa mengacu pada praktik pemilihan pada masa Khulafa' al-Rasyidin, dan pemerintahan Islam berikutnya. Walaupun dalam al-Qur'an dan Sunnah tidak secara tegas memberikan pola dalam memilih pemimpin, namun para pemikir Islam telah menawarkan konsep-konsep tentang bagaimana cara umat Islam memilih presidennya. Secara umum ada tiga pola pemilihan presiden dalam Islam, yaitu pola penunjukan, pola musyawarah para tokoh wakil rakyat, dan pola pemilihan langsung oleh rakyat.

Pada rubrik *Book Review* kami menyajikan tulisan Edwin Syarif yang mengulas buku karya David G. Myers berjudul *Intuisi: Fungsi Insting dan Naluri untuk Meraih Kesuksesan*. Buku ini menjelaskan adanya dua aliran pemikiran yang sangat berpengaruh sampai saat ini, yaitu rasionalisme yang menekankan pada rasio dan empirisme pada indrawi. Keduanya telah

melahirkan disiplin-disiplin ilmu pengetahuan yang berbeda. Rasionalisme dengan metode deduktifnya melahirkan ilmu-ilmu pasti sedangkan empirisme dengan metode induktifnya melahirkan ilmu-ilmu alam. Kedua aliran pemikiran tersebut-Rasionalisme dan Empirisme-telah mewarnai cara berpikir Barat selama tiga abad dan telah menghasilkan kemajuan sains dan teknologi yang luar biasa.

Selain akal dan indera, hati juga menjadi sumber pengetahuan dalam epistemologi Islam. Penamaan pengetahuan ini ada yang menyebut dengan pengetahuan intuisi, sementara Nasr menyebutnya pengetahuan *'irfan* dalam pembahasan tentang epistemologi Mulla Sadra. Sebagian dari ilmuwan modern, di antaranya adalah Pascal, seorang ahli matematika yang cukup terkenal, William James, ahli ilmu jiwa dan filosof terkenal berkebangsaan Amerika, Alexis Carrel dan Bergson, menganggap hati sebagai sumber pengetahuan sebagaimana akal dan indera.

Sebagian tulisan yang tersaji dalam **Refleksi** kali ini merupakan rangkaian upaya untuk menemukan kembali aktualitas dan kontekstualitas ekspresi keberagaman melalui penafsiran terhadap teks-teks agama, baik secara langsung maupun melalui realitas historis sang penafsir. Selamat membaca.

Jakarta, Desember 2004

Redaksi

TAKWIL TRADITION IN MALAY LITERARY WORKS: ISLAMIC SPIRITUAL INSIGHTS IN DANARTO'S NOSTALGIA

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Abstract: *This article addresses the notion of the practice of allegory accomplished by Danarto, one of Indonesian writers whose literary works express much Islamic spirituality through non-Islamic characters. Like Malay Sufi writers, allegorically Danarto uses Hindu Javanese characters in his short story, Nostalgia, to express his spiritual notion. Such practice of using symbolic expression has been well known among Koran interpreters (Mufasir) and Sufi masters (Sālik) as Takwil. In this regard, Danarto expresses his spiritual account through symbolic figures used in Hindu-Javanese tradition of the Mahabharata, such as Arjuna, Kresna, Bisma, Abimanyu, and Sembadra. Different from Malay Muslim writers who used Malay Islam spiritual terms and analogies, Danarto uses those Hindu symbolic figures to express his spiritual journey rooted in Javanese culture where syncretism of various values, especially Islam, is obvious over time. His literary endeavor is part of that long tradition of Takwil practices in Malay religious works, which are substantially identified as Islamic pantheism.*

Keywords: *Tradition, Takwil, Literature, Malay, Spirituality, Danarto, Indonesia.*

Abstrak: Artikel ini membahas tentang praktik alegori yang dilakukan oleh Danarto, salah satu penulis Indonesia yang karya-karyanya banyak mengekspresikan spiritualitas Islam melalui tokoh-tokoh non-Islam. Seperti para penulis sufi Melayu, Danarto secara alegoris menggunakan tokoh-tokoh Hindu Jawa dalam cerpennya, *Nostalgia*, untuk menyampaikan gagasannya tentang spiritualitas. Praktik penggunaan ekspresi simbolis seperti ini sudah dikenal di kalangan penafsir al-Qur'an (Mufasir) dan guru-guru sufi (Sālik) sebagai Takwil. Dalam hal ini, Danarto menyampaikan pengalamannya secara spiritual melalui tokoh-tokoh simbolis yang digunakan dalam tradisi Hindu-Jawa Mahabharata, seperti Arjuna, Kresna, Bisma, Abimanyu, dan Sembadra. Berbeda dari penulis Muslim Melayu yang menggunakan istilah dan analogi spiritual Islam Melayu, Danarto menggunakan tokoh-tokoh simbolis Hindu tersebut untuk mengekspresikan perjalanannya secara spiritual yang berakar dalam budaya Jawa di mana sinkretisme berbagai nilai, terutama Islam, terlihat jelas dari waktu ke waktu. Upaya sastranya merupakan bagian dari tradisi panjang praktik Takwil dalam karya-karya keagamaan Melayu, yang secara substansial diidentifikasi sebagai panteisme Islam.

Kata Kunci: Tradisi, Takwil, Sastra, Melayu, Spiritualitas, Danarto, Indonesia.

All that is on earth Will perish but will abide (forever)
The Face of thy Lord, Full of Majesty, Bounty and Honour.
(Koran: S. LV: 26-27)
“See the One, utter the One, know the One,
For this is the seal of the root and branches of faith”
(Mahmud Shabistari)¹

Islamic Hermeneutic: *Takwil* and Symbolic Expressions

According to Abdul Hadi WM, literary works are symbolical processes. They are no more than an imitation or mimesis of the visible world; but, analogical efforts of writers through their symbolic expressions beyond their spiritual experiences. Only are human contemplative reason and creative imagination able to understand the meaning of those esthetical works.² In Islamic tradition, such human efforts of understanding spiritual meaning of texts, which are embodied in interpretation of their inner messages, are called *Takwil* (from Arabic root, *awwala*). This tradition has been scholarly well known as an essential part of Koran hermeneutical studies relating to its allegorical utterances.

One of the essential principles of practicing the *Takwil*, Hadi says, is connecting the texts with their writers' culture, belief and world view, mainly because those literary works are not closed texts; but, consist of

culture and religious elements.³ Thus, texts are not free from human endeavor. In the case of Islamic literary works, these symbolical expressions frequently relate to spiritual works, or mystical achievements. Indeed, this notion appeared as a distinguished literary genre within Indonesian literatures, or Malay works (*Sastera Melayu*), starting from the period of Hamzah Fansuri of the 16th century to the 20th century of Indonesian-Malaysian contemporary writers like Sutradji Calzoum Bachri, Kuntowijoyo, Danarto, Kemala and Siti Zainon, along with their strong individual consciousness and spiritual attachments upon their works. Those spiritual expressions of Malay literary works, Hadi says, have been known as a Spiritual movement leading into beautiful words (*gerakan sukma yang mengalir ke indah kata*).⁴

Historically, the nature of Malay literary works cannot be separated from the Islamic influences brought by Muslim travelers from various Muslim regions, mostly Arabians, where spiritual traditions among the travelers were obvious. Then, Islamic spirituality, or Sufism, reached its peak in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Malay world, embodied in both Islamic thought and literary works. Accordingly, as stated by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, a prominent Malaysian scholar, such character became an Islamic *Weltanschauung* in the Malay world expressed by the Sufis. The notion of Malay worldview, al-Attas says, is comparable to that of the Koran's influences upon the Arabs.⁵

Theoretically, the inner experiences are illustrated by the Sufis through spiritual stages (*maqāmāt*) and states (*aḥwāl*). Therefore, in terms of Islamic spirituality, personal intimacy gained by the seeker may appear as spiritual experiences reflecting his spiritual adventure upon which a relation between signifier and the signified is so intense where rationality and emotion interact each other, and symbolically manifest into poetic expressions that so called mystical utterances. "Both poetry and mystical experience show emotional, rather than factual content, both depend, in great part, on a stream of subtle association for their effect".⁶

Based on such very basic spiritual accounts, this paper would like to address Islamic spiritual insights in Danarto's short story, *Nostalgia*, dealing with understanding it through spiritual terms used in Islamic spiritual tradition.

A Brief on Islamic Mysticism and Its Influences in Malay Works: Terms and Figures

There are various definitions describing what Islamic spirituality is. However, generally, the term of Islamic spirituality relates to the relationship between a man and his God in the light of spiritual efforts that lead human beings closer and even “united” with their beloved God. In addition to this spiritual term, Islam has a conceptual belief that Allah has two different manifestations, inner (*al-Bāṭin*) and outer (*al-Dhāhir*). These two kinds of beliefs embodied into transcendent and profane as well as macrocosmic and microcosmic terminologies. Moreover, making the self-closer to God firmly relates to Islamic concept of Tauhid (divine unity). To implement this divine concept, Muslim seekers (*sālik*) should actualize it through various ways and will end up with different results and manifestation. Physically, their spiritual efforts may be manifesting into various expressions from philosophical thought, behavior, artistic works such as poems, stories, calligraphies, to spiritual utterances (*syatahāt*) and teachings (*wirid* and *zikir*).

Specifically, Seyyed Hossein Nasr states that “Islamic spirituality is the experience and knowledge of this Unity and its realization in thoughts, words, acts, and deeds, through the will, the soul, and the intelligence. This spirituality is ultimately to live and act constantly according to God’s will, to love Him with one’s whole being, and finally to know Him through that knowledge which integrates and illuminates and whose realization is never divorced from love nor possible without correct action”.⁷ Hence, the notion of unity with God emerges very central in Islamic spirituality that symbolically may appear as a representation of the relation between a lover (*‘asyiq*) and Beloved (*ma’syuq*) with particular nature and characters which are seemingly contradict to religious ethics and ordinary social order (*al-u’rf*).⁸

According to certain spiritual teachings, in order to reach the level of lover a seeker should have special rituals and rules. For example, to gain particular stages and states, a Sufis beginner should have start with remembering Allah (*zikir*) and asking His forgiveness, as his daily effort before stepping into a higher level of the repentance (*tawbah*). Having finished this level, the seeker may elevate up to other spiritual levels, such as his feeling of resignation (*tawakkal*), or submitting to Allah, and acquiescence in Allah’s will (*rida*). Although it is not a common effect of those spiritual

exercises, to some degree, after the seeker's feeling and reason reached those stages and states, he potentially may conduct extraordinary attitudes seemingly contradicting to Islamic teaching (*sharī'ah*), such as ignoring daily prayers (*ṣalāt*) or other rituals every Muslim is obliged to perform. Once a seeker reaches the level of *syatakhāt* by which his spiritual attachments with the Beloved (Allah) becomes so intense, it may potentially lead him to express his uncontrolled spiritual ecstasy through ecstatic expressions, as showed by many Sufi masters who had obtained the level of truly Gnosis (*Ahl ma'rifat*): Abū Yazīd al-Buṣṭāmī (d. 874), Abū Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj, Rabī'ah al-Adawiyah, Ibn 'Arābī and so forth.⁹

Abū Yazīd al-Buṣṭāmī, for instance, was known with his extraordinary ecstatic utterance of "*Subkhāni mā 'adzbāmī Sha'ni*", "Glory to Me!", "How great is My majesty!". Similarly, al-Ḥallāj, a Baghdad Sufi master expressed his radical spiritual notion of "Ana al-Hagg!" "Tam the Divine Truth!". As a result, al-Ḥallāj's miraculous statements were compensated by his tragic death.¹⁰

Too, Rabī'ah Adawiyah, a Persian women Sufi, was recognized with her spiritual term of love (*maḥabbah*) by which she expressed her spiritual relationship with her Lord, while Abū Yazīd Al-Buṣṭāmī was familiar with his mystical term of annihilation (*fana*) and Ibnu Arabi with his concept of unity of being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). However, Sufi masters' experiences are also well known through their literary works, such as Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī with his popular poetry, *Matsnawi*, Fariduddin Athar of his *Mantiq al-Tayyār* (song of birds), Hamzah Fansuri with his *Syair Perahu*, and Iqbal with his insightful spiritual poetries.

The influences of foreign Sufis are very obvious in Malay Sufis works, particularly among Sufi figures within the genre of the unity of Being (*Waḥdat al-wujūd*). In the history of Islamic spirituality, this spiritual group has been known as Islamic Pantheism. Sufi figures like Ibnu 'Arabī and 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jillī, along with their concepts of *Waḥdat al-wujūd* and *Insan Kamīl* (A Universal Man or a Perfect Man) attracted Malay Sufis to follow, and even extend their mystical concepts. In addition, both Sufi masters became the most influential Sufi figures in Malay world. Furthermore, their teachings emerged in various forms of local Sufi institutions (*tarekat*), from *Wujūdiyyah*, *Aḥādiyyah*, *Tijāniyah*, to *Qadīriyah*.¹¹

Such historical fact is concluded by Malay observers as specific spiritual networks connecting two worlds: the center of Islam in Arabian regions

and the periphery of Malay Islam where a great transformation of Islamic knowledge, particularly its spiritual elements, turning from the center to the periphery, either upon translation efforts of Arabian or Persian spiritual works or extending specific traditions within Malay Sufi tradition different from the mainstream of spiritual tradition in the center of Islam. Accordingly, Arabian spiritual works attracted much Malay figures to translate them into their own language. For example, Siyar al-Salikin was translated by 'Abd. Somad al-Palembangi from al-Ghazali's *Bidāyat al-Hidāyat* (the Beginning of Guidance), *Hikām Melayu* by Abdul Malik from Ibn Athā' Allāh al-Iskandarani's *Kitāb al-Hikām*, and Abdurrauf al-Singkili's Koranic translation, *al-Tarjuman Mustafad*. More interestingly, not only did Malay Sufis engage in translating Arabian scholarly works, they also were able to express their spiritual journeys through personal works, and mostly in poetic expression. The works of Hamzah Fansuri, such as *Asrār al-'Arifin*, the *Sharaab* and the *Muntahi*, the *rubā'ī* and the *shai'r* can be classified as the extended Malay mystical works.¹²

Following their Arabian and Persian colleagues, Malay Sufis depicted their spiritual experiences through symbolic languages. To express their intimacy with God (the Creator) Fansuri, for example, uses the term of wave and ocean to represent human being and God respectively, describing his *wahdat al-wujūd* beyond his Sufistic utterance "that wave is but part of the ocean but the ocean is not the wave".¹³ Other Fansuri's mystical symbolic expression are some of the following terms: son of market (*anak dagang*), love and being (*cinta dan wujud*), love and Gnostic (*cinta dan ma'rifat*), Kaaba, heart, and pilgrimage (*ka'bah, qalb, dan haji*), Kaaba and birds (*ka'bah dan burung*), fish Tongkol (*ikan tongkol*).¹⁴ In other words, Malay was a spiritual mirror of the world of Islamic spirituality.

However, although Malay was a fertile region for Muslim missionaries to absorb foreign Islamic spiritualities, some regions in Malay have different spiritual characters. Various local cultures influenced ways of Sufis' proselytizing methods. Compared to Sumatera, for example, the lack of Muslim kingdoms in Java significantly shaped the modus of Sufi missionaries' teaching of Islamic doctrines. While the relationship between the power holders and Sufi figures in Sumatera and Malacca (Malaysia today) was inevitable, in Java, on the other hand, the Hindu-Buddhist Kingdoms' influences were very strong. Therefore, Muslim missionaries, predominantly Sufi teachers, had different cultural strategies in propagating Islamic

teaching. In other words, political conditions seemed to play significant factors to the ways of Islamic propagation (*dakwah*) conducted by those Sufi masters.

Rather than encouraging the people to fully convert into Islam, Sufi missionaries in Java, for instance, accommodated local spiritual tradition among its Hindu population. As stated by Osman Bakar, “in their encounter with Hindu-Buddhist mystics, the Sufi missionaries did not call for rejection of the existence of religious and spiritual doctrines, but sought to reinterpret them in the light of Islamic spiritual teaching as embodied in Sufism...the coming of Islam to Java, where Hindu-Buddhist mysticism was more deeply rooted, can be seen as effecting a Sufi corrective to the interpretation of the Hindu doctrines according the Vedanta”.¹⁵ Such cultural assimilation seemed to be unavoidable. The result was a blended Islamic-Javanese culture, popularly called as the Islamic syncretism, due to common spiritual essence of Islamic spirituality and Hindu-Buddhist mysticism.¹⁶

Culturally, not only did those Sufi missionaries accommodate locally “un-Islamic” values into their Islamic spiritual teachings, they also made Javanese puppet theatre their preaching media, while maintaining Hindu-Buddhist symbols and characters in their *dakwah* activities. Eloquently, this cultural strategy was practiced by Sunan Kalijaga, a member of the Nine saints (Wali Songo) in the period of Islamic propagation in Java.¹⁷ Consequently, to describe the face of Islam in Java and Sumatra, to some extent, seems to be not a simple thing because of their different characters caused by previous cultural and political backgrounds mentioned above.¹⁸

Muslim scholars have tried to define the term of Islamic spirituality. Fazlur Rahman (Pakistani born) concludes that Ibnu Arabi’s *Wahdat al-wujūd* can be accounted as Islamic pantheism. Some of Rahman’s spiritual terminologies will be used in understanding Danarto’s spiritual insights, who says that Javanese spiritual tradition practiced by his family influenced much his literary works. One of such influences can be looked at in Danarto’s short story, *Nostalgia*, as will be assessed latter.

Addressing Ibn Arabi’s notion of pantheism, according to Rahman, this spiritual point of view perceives God as the source of everything, and He manifests in everything. Thus, out of God is the shadow of Him. Accordingly, “all religious truth and morality is relative... Further God being the only reality, everything is determined. God himself has a will but no choice

and freedom.”¹⁹ Too, Rahman sees Ibnu Arabi’s notion of Islamic pantheism as no longer a single spiritual enterprise, but as an interconnected historical events of the long lasting of theological discourse among Muslims in the form of the relationship between the power of human being (*Quadrat*) and God determinism upon which *Muktazilah* (a rational Muslim group) and *Jabbariyah* (a pre-deterministic Muslim group) widely disputed in various theological subjects (*Kalām*). On the other hand, Syed Hossein Nasr, strictly emphasizes that Islamic pantheism differs from other religious pantheistic notions in his conception of the impossibility of human being to be fully united with God, mainly because both are different (creation and the Creator).²⁰ At the same time, many, including Danarto’s “spiritual teacher”, Rustamadji, argue that man can be united in God because of their similar essence.²¹

The followings are some major themes of Islamic mysticism quoted from Rahman and Nasr: The Absolute Being (*al-Wujūd al-Mutlāq*), *Insān Kamil* (The Universal Man/Perfect Man), *al-Sa’ādah* (Happiness), *Tajalliyā* (self-manifestations), *Fana’* (annihilation of human attributes), *Baqā’* (divine attributes), *Hulul* (melting, being incarnation of God, or non-human form), and *Wahdat al-wujūd* (unity of being where human and God are identical and interwoven).²²

About Danarto: social and spiritual background

Danarto is one of Indonesian distinguished writers. His ability to combine abstract and real worlds upon his literary works, mostly short stories, has distinctively colored modern Indonesian literatures, which have been dominated by rational influences or modern thought. Like Iwa Simatupang with his absurd characters, Danarto impressively serves the readers with his belief in the existence of unreal and real worlds, asserting that there is a relationship or harmony between these seemingly separated worlds. His untitled short story, but just “a combined symbol of love and an arrow”, published by *Horison* (No. 2) in 1968, attracted various comments and praising from many. His distinguished talent of dialoging the unseen and the real worlds has been acknowledged by Indonesian writers that Danarto’s works have contributed a special impression on the history of modern Indonesian literature.

Danarto’s Javanese notion of that the world is God’s manifestation strongly appears in most of his works. However, according to Prihatini,

Danarto's process of creativity cannot be separated from his social and personal background. His parents who practiced Javanese mysticism, Hamka's books in Islamic spirituality, and his "spiritual teacher" Rustamadji, who believes that himself as well as the world is essentially the same with God, influenced much Danarto's works.²³

Danarto was born in Mojowetan, Sragen, central Java on June 27 1940 in a humble family practicing Javanese mysticism. His father was a small supervisor (*mandor*) in a sugar factory and his mother was a vendor. According to Danarto, one night his parent went around their houses without any clothes and bare foot, aiming at protecting their children from devil and hoping for their happiness. One day his father also showed him a ghost in its physical form. After his father passed way, his mother, he says, still practiced their Javanese rituals, such as burning *Kemenyan* (incense derived from gum benzoin) and providing a bunch of flowers. In addition, his spiritual experience, like his mystical experience of being died and of seeing his friends in the face of God, significantly influenced Danarto's writings.²⁴

Too, his spiritual teacher, Rustamadji, a painter who states that God is the only existence of being while the rest is nothing, enriches his spiritual endeavor. Rustamadji's books, said Danarto, have shaken his heart, indeed. However, compared to Hindu's tradition, Prihatmi says, Rustamadji's point of view is quite similar with the teaching of Hindu Upanishad that teaches that the world and it contains are nothing because they are immortal. But the only being is The Eternity that cannot be limited by space and time: Brahman.²⁵ Besides Rustamadji's spiritual books, Danarto said while commenting Hamka's book of *Tasawuf*, that Hamka's explanation about Ibn Arabi's *Wahdat al-wujūd* (Unity of Being) also influenced his mind, especially when Hamka stated "that the Being is the only One. Everything consists of nature of God and Its creature. If there are many differences among the real and unreal, these differences are only in their appearances (manifesting) from The One."²⁶

Characters and Values in *Nostalgia*

To express his spiritual messages, as a Javanese, Danarto, seems like Sunan Kalijogo of the 16th century Java, who used characters and symbols within Javanese Hinduism of *Mahabaratha*: Arjuna, Kresna, Bisma, Abi-

manyu, Sembadra through puppet show media, while Danarto uses additional figures and values such as a frog, hero, wisdom, ratio and emotion etc. Danarto eloquently addresses those values and characters in a modern scene of the battle of *Bharata Yudha* and the journey of human being played by Abimanyu in the light of the pantheistic worldview that "all nature is pervaded by God, that we can all become God." The good and devil are symbolized by two brothers, *Pandawa* and *Kurawa*, in the great war of Bharata Yuddha in the field of *Kurusetra* where values, reason, feeling, and fate appear in line with modern setting along with modern terms: ambition, position, wealth, dignity, heroism, materialism and so on.

To begin with, spiritual atmosphere in *Nostalgia* strongly appears in its very beginning once a mysterious frog acts as a source of every wisdom and virtue that should be reached by every human being. On the other hand, Abimanyu appears as the symbol of common human inclination of passion and desires upon which his knowledge perceives that his duty as a warrior whose responsibility is only to deal with the war and to sit in the highest position in the palace. Regarding to this Mahabaratha's main character, Danarto tries to connect spiritual messages with the reality of modern society considering that war as their only means to gain valuable things while forgetting that beside this hectic world is a highest value everybody should reach during his life, the so called a timeless wisdom. Criticizing Abimanyu the frog says, "You care more for your throne than you do for wisdom".²⁷

Such a spiritual dialogue is further continued by bringing it into a higher level of spiritual notion of the unity of human being and God, namely, pantheistic shown by frog's utterances teaching Abimanyu about his own essence and other existences in the world. Abimanyu's curiosity of questioning himself is responded by his Spiritual explanation, which seems similar with the concept of unity of being introduced by the great Sufis, Ibn Arabi: "I suddenly found myself a frog, something very different from being a man. It's very different. But only in form, not in soul, spirit or essence. All creatures are God's representatives on the earth, whether they be human, animal, plant or object".²⁸ Hence, the Islamic notion of the concept of unity of being (*Wahdat al-wujūd*) is very obvious that emphasizes, as declared by Ibn Arabi, that all things are the shadow of God, or in Hamzah Fansuri's mystical notion that this God is known as the First Determination (*al-ta'ayyūn awwāl*).²⁹

More interestingly, in addition to its spiritual notion, *Nostalgia* can be read as an exemplar of debate between the human power and fate of God with it emphasize on the power of the former than the second. Seemingly, this notion depicts modern thought of human freedom and their ability to determine their future. Compared to the theological debate in Islamic history, such discourse may trace back to the debate between Mu'tazila and Jabbariyah. The first represented Muslim groups claiming that men have power (*qudrat*) and they are the center of the world, while the second believes that God has created entire the world by his plan. This theological debate is nicely illustrated in *Nostalgia* through the Frog's description on Pandawa and Kurawa and the position of Bisma within their long-lasting enmity: "Finally the two families realized that the fate of the world lay in their hands. Not even the gods could separate the good from evil...He (Bisma) did not help the Kurawa because he wished to defeat Pandawa or oppose the Pandawa because he loved the Kurawa. No. No. He did not think of either side. He thought of fate. He wanted to draw fate of himself as quickly as he could and shorten his stay in this world of illusion".³⁰ This excerpt substantially contains three folds of very classic Islamic theology: intellect (*'aql*), fate (*taqdir*) is generally close to human feeling on the one hand, and some spiritual terms like spiritual reason (*qalb*), soul (*nafs*), and spirit (*ruh*) are closely relate to spiritual experience on the other. The first and the second melt into a divine being, and the *qalb* becomes the center of all ecstatic journeys.

The relationship between men and human history appears as a hard thing *Nostalgia* wants to address in the form of the idea of nihilistic of human beings in their histories on the one hand, and their obligations as the makers of their own histories on the other. Therefore, a true human being, according to the Frog, is a man who disappears from his history, instead of his strong effort to devote all of his life to the Supreme Being through knowing Him and His existence as the last termination of everything. Every historical attribute given to human beings, such as a philosopher, a king, an artist, and so forth, is extremely nothing. The crucial of being an ideal type of the mirror of God and of being disappeared from human beings' histories can be seen in the Frog's statement:

"...One could do better: It would be best to vanish from history completely. But you will be as renowned as Seta and Bisma. Their names are carved in history and it is a burden they must bear. You cannot escape either, because like them you fight for righteous' sake. And this isa burden (for you). A man is not born into the world to become

a philosopher, a statesman, an artist or suchlike," he continues, "he (a man) is born of the necessity to confront nature. He must embrace complete knowledge of the essence of creation and the being of God".³¹

What *Nostalgia* expresses above seems similar with the discourse of human being and the knowledge of Essence, which is very central in Islamic mysticism. One of them is under the notion of the concept of The Universal Man (*Insān Kamil*) proposed by both Sufi masters, Ibn 'Arabī and 'Abd. Karīm al-Jillī (d. 1428).³²

Nostalgia also firmly presents the circle of life and its spiritual manifestation in the form of reincarnation process, as a long journey of human soul to reach an absolute happiness of being united with His essence:

"We die and are reborn and die and are reborn. It is a cruel evolution but & necessary one". The same thing, over and over. And for what? To perfect happiness. Until a moment arrives in the millions of years' travel and we, come before Him, to remain motionless, a part of Him forever. Multiple but one".³³

From this excerpt, the interconnectedness of reincarnation and pantheism shows very close to the main goal of spiritual efforts among the spiritual seekers—being united with their Beloved, The Supreme Being, that so called the ultimate happiness. Terminologically, in Islamic mysticism, such reincarnation, or rebirth, or moving of a soul into bodies is recognized as *ḥulūl*, the process of melting of human spirit with God's spirit. The result is that the existence of the Supreme Being manifests into the form of human utterances.

Once extraordinary utterances turn off, the seekers, sometimes, show unusual acts contradicting to formal Islamic teaching or social order, because of their spiritual inclination. Accordingly, for the seekers all are noting, but God. Such notion is illustrated by *Nostalgia* once the Frog warns Abimanyu, "Death and life force us into awareness throughout eternity: social norms and regulations are illusion".³⁴ Similarly, in the history of Islamic mysticism, what happened with radical Sufi master such as al-Ḥallāj and Sheikh Siti Jenar of Java, both were killed because of their extraordinary spiritual practices, appears as a convincing fact of the disobeying of the seekers to religious regulations (*sharī'ah*).

More interestingly, having frog's turn finishes, *Nostalgia* does not encompass Abimanyu's Spiritual journey directly, but: it shows the debate between Sembadra and Arjuna that represents the dispute between feeling and reason. Symbolically, Sembadra represents a traditional way of view: practicality, women's habit, and irrationality. On the other hand, Arjuna

is perceived, to some extent, as modernity, man's way, rationality, wisdom, and heroism, which are usually identical with men. Yet, between these two mainstreams of thoughts, Danarto precedes them a predestinate notion dealing with the great war of Bharatayudha, "All were recorded and counted. None was forgotten, none was missed. Definite. Definite. Everything was written down..."³⁵ Compared to theological discourses among Muslims, such statement is mostly like Jabbariyah's point of view that believes in the deterministic notion where everything is under God's hand.

Later on, Danarto depicts feeling and reason once Sembadra and Arjuna found their beloved son, Abimanyu, wounded. While Sembadra wishes his son able to survive and live, Arjuna lets him die, for his serious wound:

Sembadra : "Live, my son, live!" She screamed. "You must live!"

Arjuna : "No! He must die!"

Sembadra : "No he must live and he does live. He has courage."

Arjuna : "He cannot. It is not right."

Sembadra : "It is. He lives, my husband, and he will fight for the right to live".

Arjuna : "It is not right. He cannot fight against fate".

Sembadra : "I do not believe in fate. Fates changes. The gods are easily moved. As easily as rice in a cooking pot".

Arjuna : "You must not talk like that!"

Sembadra : "The fault is not mine! He fights his wound. He wants to live. And you say that he must die. I cannot understand such heroism". *Arjuna*: "Sembadra, genuine heroism submits to fate. That is what we are concerned with."

Sembadra : "Fate? Nonsense. A nice word to escape responsibility. A men can pretend to be wise when he says 'fate', no matter how hard the task, how complex the problem, or how arrange things seem to be." (*Rebellion, critical reason*).

Sembadra : "...Why Tam so upset? I don't know. None of us knows. We know nothing".

Arjuna : "You are right, Sembadra", "I know nothing about myself".

Kresna : "Nor do I", "I know nothing about myself".³⁶

Substantially, this dialogue can be referred back to classical debates in human civilization, particularly in the world of religion, where feeling and reason are symbolically represented by Sembadra and Arjuna respectively, as happened in the history of Islamic theology (*Kalām*) between Mu'tazila and Jabbariyah. However, it is hard to define Sembadra as an irrational representation because of her emotion and love to his son, ignoring his serious injure. At the same time, as a rational symbol Arjuna, based on his strong belief in the rationality, saying that Abimanyu's severe wound may

disappear him. In contrast, Sembadra blames the notion of fate decided by gods (*dewa*). According to her, gods' determinism is a kind of the absurdity. Sembadra's thought can be seen as a rebellious expression against the role of gods who sent his beloved son to the battle, asking the reason why gods choose his beloved son to lead the war. At the same time, Arjuna's rationality cannot be defined as a truly rational actor, because of his belief in the role of gods' fate regarding to what happens with his son. Through this conversation, some established concepts of heroism, honor, feeling, and fate are firmly criticized. In other words, feeling and reason fail to define what happens in human being properly.

Finally, the end of the discourse lies on human ignorance of their experiences, as showed by Sembadra, Arjuna and Kresna's consciousness of unknowing of themselves. They have not reached an agreement yet. Hence, a spiritual termination seems to be an alternate way to understand the reality, where Mu'tazila's opponents are eager to choose a spiritual path, or Sufism, as their last destinations in order to answer the ambiguity of feeling, reason, and fate.

Additionally, Abimanyu represents such spiritual shelter where emotion and reason unite together and manifest in the highest level of extraordinary spiritual expression (*ma'rifat*) once he says:

"Mother and Father, please don't fight!", "Don't argue about me. Aam not. But in my non-being, I find my real meaning: God. I am eternal".

"Our problem is existence. We must return to nature. Become as babies in the womb, simple, unknowing. From not being we must return to non-being. In nonbeing we become what we are: The existent. We are not. God is."³⁷

Compared to mentioned Sufis' traditions, substantially, Abimanyu's experience is the same with Muslim seekers' ecstatic experiences in the form of the unity of being (*Waḥdat al-wujūd*). Abimanyu's spiritual utterances show his manifestation (*tajalliyā*), his annihilation (*fana*) and his disappearing of his human attributes (*ḥulūl*), due to his entering into the atmosphere of The Supreme Being's atmosphere. The result is a radical spiritual transformation as occurred with al-Buṣṭāmī, Al-Ḥallāj, Sheikh Siti Jenar and other Sufi masters where differences between themselves and their God are impossible, but, they are united in God's ambience, when their human existences (*nasūt*) meet God's Existence (*lāhūt*), then embody in divine attributes (*baqa*), before they finally claim that their existences as The Absolute Being (*al-Mutlaq al-Wujūd*) where everything is Him and returns to Him, as in Abimanyu's following utterances:

"I am eternal"

"I am neither live nor dead. I am beyond life and death. I am eternal".

"I am neither happiness and nor suffering. I am beyond both. My soul screams on the colas of the world. I am eternal. It wants to return home as quickly as possible. Back to where I came from. Back to His beautiful heart which first sent froth my soul. Come! Come! He calls me. He loves me. I want to return at once.

Return...

I am Kuruksetra, the field of battle. I am the Pandawa and the Kurawa. I am the strategy, the army, the heroes and the cowards, fused without space or limitation, like water in mud. I approve of war, I hate war, every explosion takes place in my soul. My soul is dazed by the sight of blood. My spirit walks with death...I am the soldier, the tent, rice, the sword and death".³⁸

In addition to this *Wahdat al-wujūd* expression, this excerpt also shows strong Koranic influences where Allah calls and welcomes beautiful souls to be returning to Him, as Koran says (S. LXXXIX.27-29):

(To the righteous soul will be said:) "O (thou) soul, In (complete) rest and satisfaction! Come back thou To the Lord, well pleased (thyself), And well-pleasing Unto Him. Entering thou, then Among my Devotes!"

These verses implicitly contain of the notion of the unity of being. According to Abdullah Yusuf Ali, that all righteous souls enter into their inheritance and receive their welcome with a title that suggest freedom from all pain, sorrow, doubt, struggle, disappointment, passion, and even further desire: at rest, in peace, in a state of complete satisfaction.³⁹ (Ali, 2001:1735)

Theologically, Islamic monotheistic notions appear in *Nostalgia*, instead of the concept of "Gods" in Hinduism. Abimanyu's Spiritual expression seems to show Danarto's Islamic theological perspective of the existence of God, emphasizing monotheistic notion of Allah who has many attributes and manifestations upon which the writer uses Hindus term of gods (*dewa*):

"I am Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu, and hold them united in my hands... Everything returns to me. I have counted everything and everything is mine".⁴⁰

Through Abimanyu's utterances above Danarto wants to show his pantheistic belief of that the only God is exist, while the others are nothing. Abimanyu's mourning of deep longing of his village shows Danarto's character of strong spirituality, as experienced by many Sufis masters whose desires burn their emotion in order to return to their Beloved: Allah.

Conclusion

In sum, although Danarto uses Hindus character and symbols, his *Nostalgia* shows his distinguished spiritual insights. Like spiritual masters expressing their spiritual works, eloquently Danarto shows his extraordinary

spiritual gift on the basis of the interconnectedness of the two worlds: inner, abstract, soft (*bathin, halus*) and outer (*lahir, kasar, wadag*), transcendent and immanent, sacred and profane, together with feeling and reason. Like Koran's interpreters (*Mufassirūn*) attaching the text that consists of the two dimensions, these two seemingly different worlds are smoothly dialogued by Danarto in *Nostalgia*, where Abimanyu represents Danarto's spiritual notion. Indeed, through *Nostalgia* Danarto tries to "Islamizes" the epic of Mahabharata with Islamic spiritual elements emphasizing on monotheistic account. *Nostalgia* delivers strong flavor of Islamic spiritual insights.

Danarto's ability to rearticulate traditional values, such as heroism, wisdom, duty, and characters, like Sembadra, Arjuna, Kresna, Abimanyu, and Frog, into timely arguments makes *Nostalgia* an ever-ready text to be consumed. As the central figure, Abimanyu has awakened the readers concerning with Islamic spirituality to what happened with some Sufi masters like al-Ḥallāj, Ibn Arabi, and Hamzah Fansuri who expressed their spiritual journeys through the allegorical utterances (*Takwil*) beyond the texts. Rather than expressing his rich spiritual experiences in peculiar spiritual works practiced by the prominent Sufi masters, Danarto uses Abimanyu and other Mahabharata's figures as his medium to share his Javanese Spiritual notion with the readers. As an open text, *Nostalgia*, can be understood through different perspectives, however. Its spiritual insights allow its readers, regardless of their belief and backgrounds, to obtain different impressions and conclusions referring to the same root stated by Koran: "All that is on earth Will perish: But will abide (forever) The Face of thy Lord, Full of Majesty, Bounty and Hon-our".⁴¹ In *Nostalgia* Danarto has eloquently followed Malay tradition of *Takwil* by which he uses allegorical expression in order to present traditional values beyond modern scene.

Endnotes

1. In Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1991) "Introduction" in Seyyed Hossein Nasr (ed.), *Islamic Spirituality: Manifestations*, p. xiii.
2. Abdul Hadi W. M. (2002), "Ta'wil sebagai Asas Teori Sastra dan Bentuk Hermeneutik Islam", *Journal Paramadina University*, 154-5.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 162.
4. Abdul Hadi W. M. (2003), "Wawasan Sastra Hamzah Fansuri dan Estetika Sufi Nusantara", *Dewan Sastra Mac 2003-Fokus*. (Online) Available: <http://dbp.gov.my/majalah/ds3fok.htm>, p. 1.

5. Osman Bin Bakar (1991), "Sufism in the Malay-Indonesian World" in Seyyed Hossein Nasr (ed.), *Islamic Spirituality: Manifestation*, p. 259.
6. Alexander Knysh (2000), *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History*, p.150.
7. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Introduction*, p. xiii.
8. Peter J. Awn (2001), "The Ethical Concerns of Classical Sufism" in *The Journal of Religious Ethics*; Abdul Hadi W.M. (2001), *Tasawuf yang Tertindas: Kajian Hermeneutik terhadap Karya-Karya Hamzah Fansuri*.
9. See Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1991); Alexander Knysh (2000); and Idries Shah (1964).
10. Peter J. Awn, p. 247.
11. Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism...*; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Spirituality...*
12. Bahrudin Ahmad (1991), "Malay Literature" in Seyyed Hossein Nasr (ed.), *Islamic Spirituality: Manifestation*.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 374.
14. Abdul Hadi W.M. *Tasawuf yang Tertindas...*
15. Osman Bin Bakar, *Sufism in the Malay...*, p. 269.
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid.*
18. Pantheism is the view that "everything that exist constitutes a unity [in some sense] and... this all-inclusive unity is divine [in some sense]. There are various interpretations of the meaning of the pantheism. See Michael P. Levine, (1994), *Pantheism: A non-theistic concept of deity*. p. 25.
19. Ebrahim Moosa (ed.) (2000), *Fazlur Rahman: Revival and Reform in Islam, A Study of Islamic Fundamentalism*, p. 85.
20. Syed Hossein Nasr (1964), *Three Muslim Sages: Avicenna-Suhrawardi-Ibn 'Arabi*.
21. Th. Sri Rahayu Prihatmi (1989), *Fantasi Alam Kedua Kumpulan Cerpen Danarto: Dialog Antara Dunia Nyata dan Dunia Tidak Nyata*; see also Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Spirituality...*
22. Ibrahim Moosa, Fazlur Rahman...; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Ibid.*
23. Th. Sri Rahayu Prihatmi, *Fantasi Alam Kedua...*
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 161-162.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 168.
27. Danarto, (1978), "Nostalgia" in Harry Aveling (Trans.) *Abracadabra*, p. 11.
28. *Ibid.*
29. Bahruddin Ahmad, *Malay Literature...* p. 374.
30. Danarto, *Nostalgia*, p. 92.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 93-94.
32. William C. Chittick (1991), "Ibn 'Arabi and His School" in Seyyed Hossein Nasr (ed.), *Islamic Spirituality...*; Alexander Knysh (2000), *Islamic Mysticism...*
33. Danarto, *Nostalgia*, p. 94.
34. *Ibid.*
35. *Ibid.*, p. 96.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 100-2.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 103-4.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 104-5.
39. Abdullah Yusuf Ali (2001), *The Qur'an: The Translation & Commentary*, p. 1735.
40. Danarto, *Nostalgia*, p. 105.
41. Koran: S. LV: 26-27.

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