

MANUSCRIPTS AND SOCIAL PRACTICE

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Abstract: This research is based on discourse analysis, aims to explain the manuscripts as a cultural knowledge production and distribution processes. The research materials are ulu manuscripts preserved in the State Museum of Bengkulu and in the community as well. The analysis is carried out by utilizing the principles of discourse analysis and social semiotics, through text descriptions, interpretations, and explanations. Description is the analysis of text and the production process, while interpretation is the analysis of the text as a social practice, and the explanation is a social analysis of the text. Based on internal and external evidence of the text, the following findings were obtained: (1) ulu texts are generally *codex unicus*, there is not enough evidence of a genealogical relationship between one manuscript with other manuscripts of one type/kind; (2) ulu texts are produced not through text transmission rather through transformation of the texts in oral tradition and in social practice as well, i.e. the corpus of texts in oral tradition and the social practices as a sources of text production; (3) the text in the manuscripts, thus, constitutes a certain degree of social practice.

Keywords: *Manuscripts, Texts, Social Practice, Discourse Analysis*

The concern and study of ulu texts, local names for *rencong* or *ka-ga-nga* script,⁸ have been pioneered by European scholars over three centuries ago.⁹ At first, studies of the text were part of ethnographic studies.¹⁰ Further studies on the ulu text were carried out through a philological approach which the accentuation to the texts editing and the analysis of the structure of the text autonomously, for example by Westenenk (1919), Jaspan (1964), and Braginsky (1988). In his publication, Braginsky strive the text reconstruction of *Syair Perahu Hamzah Fansuri* based on 3 ulu texts to obtain archetype through a stemma method (cf. Maas 1967; McGann 1991, 207-208; West 1973). Similar studies were carried out by Sarwono (1993, 1996, 2000a, 2000b) by focus on the publication of accessible texts (Robson, 1988) from a number of texts reviewed.

The text studies as cultural products that are autonomous, isolated, and final as mentioned above set aside the context. Manuscripts and texts are produced from certain community and cultural situations of their time, and have their value in the context and time in question (Kratz 1981, 283),¹¹ so the study of the manuscripts and the texts should regard to their cultural context so that our understanding of manuscripts and texts is more comprehensive (van Dijk 2008, 5).¹² Sarwono's studies (2006a, 2006b, 2014b, 2017), Sarwono and Astuti (2007), Sarwono, Rahayu, and Purwadi (2017) show the importance of regarding to the cultural context in the study of the manuscripts and ulu texts. Text is a phenomenon that shows the existence of certain social

⁸ The European scholar called the ulu script as *rencong* script (see de Sturler 1843, 1855; van Hasselt 1881; Helfrich 1897, 1904; Lekerkerker 1916; Wink 1926; Voorhoeve 1971), while Jaspan (1964) named it *ka-ga-nga* script; a script which is derived and developed from the post *pallava* script (Holle 1882, 14-15; Gonda 1973, 85; Sedyawati *et.al.* 2004, 2).

⁹ As far as I know, the first writings deal with the manuscripts and ulu text published in 1783, in Marsden's book *The History of Sumatra*.

¹⁰ See Marsden (1975); de Sturler (1843, 1855); van Hasselt (1881); Helfrich (1897, 1904); Lekerkerker (1916); Wink (1926).

¹¹ Kratz (1981, 283) asserted "..., is in most cases witness in its own right of a particular place at a particular time and does not therefore deserve wanton interference."

¹² As van Dijk (2008, 5) asserted, "This does not mean that we should be less precise and systematic in describing the structure of a poem or a novel, but our understanding is surely more complete when we are able to describe and also explain many more properties of such literary texts in terms of their various contexts. Contextualization is a fundamental part of our understanding of human conduct, in general, and of literature and other texts and talk, in particular."

functions that it represents, and shows cultural representations and which indicate specific identities and social relations (van Leeuwen 2005; Fairclough 1995; van Dijk 1977; Sebeok 2001). Manuscripts and texts in this sense, at first, should be seen in the perspective of discourse. Text is a discourse considering its attachment to the context (van Dijk 1977; Fairclough 1995) which its meaning is determined by its cultural environment (Teubert 2010). As a discourse, the text is the process of production and distribution of cultural knowledge and at different degrees the text is a recontextualization of social practices (Caldas-Coulthard 2003; van Leeuwen 2008).

Method

This research based on discourse analysis, especially multimodality discourse analysis or MDA (Bhatia, John Flowerdew, and Rodney H. Jones, 2008). The main objects of the research are ulu manuscripts (preserved in the State Museum of Bengkulu and in the some villages as a family heirlooms) whose text is related to texts in oral traditions and social practices. Other materials are in the form of oral texts and social practices from ethnic groups where the ulu manuscript originated. The material of oral texts and social practices related to the ulu texts studied were obtained through interviews and recording from a number of selected informants, in addition through observations of social practices carried out in several villages.

Data analysis is carried out by utilizing the principles of discourse analysis, text in the production and distribution process, and text in social communication as well (van Zoest 1993; Merrell 1997; Carter, *et.al.* 2001; Danesi 2004; Fairclough 1995, 2004; van Leeuwen 2005; Sebeok 2001). In this framework, data analysis includes descriptions, interpretations, and explanations. The description is analysis of the text and of the text production process. Interpretation is text analysis as a social practice. In interpretation, the elements of language, the writer and the text reader, the writing of the text as the interaction of the writer and the reader of the text, and the social relations between the writer and the reader of the text are described, connected, and then interpreted. In this case, intertext principles are needed (Plett 1991; Allen 2000). The explanation is social analysis of the text. The texts are interpreted socially within the framework of social semiotics (van Leeuwen 2005) and are placed in their social functions. Then, the text is interpreted based on the actions related to the text (Titscher *et al.* 2009; Jones and Norris 2005, 4-6).

Result and Discussion

The text and the scribe

The ulu manuscript is generally codex unicus. There is not enough evidence of a genealogical relationship between one manuscript to another of one type or kind of the text. On the contrary, evidence shows that ulu texts are produced not through vertical transmission, but transformed from texts in oral corpus and in social practices corpus. In fact, some of the ulu texts are transformed of social practices. Although there are several manuscripts with similar content, however, it can be ascertained that such texts do not have genealogical relations with one another and are derived through copying as assumed in the classical philological view (Mass 1967; Reynolds and Wilson 1992).

The three manuscripts preserved in the State Museum of Bengkulu, **MNB 07.30** (text α), **MNB 07.70** (text β), and **MNB 07.18** (text γ) contain the text that is partially the same, namely *rejung*.¹³ The first contains 11 verse of the *rejung*, the second contains 12 verses of the *rejung*, and the third contains 3 verses of the *rejung* and 5 stanzas of *mantra* in the social practice of *kayiak betarang*.¹⁴ Based on internal evidence, all three texts were written by different scribe. Although there is the same text in all three manuscripts, but the three are not texts that are genealogically

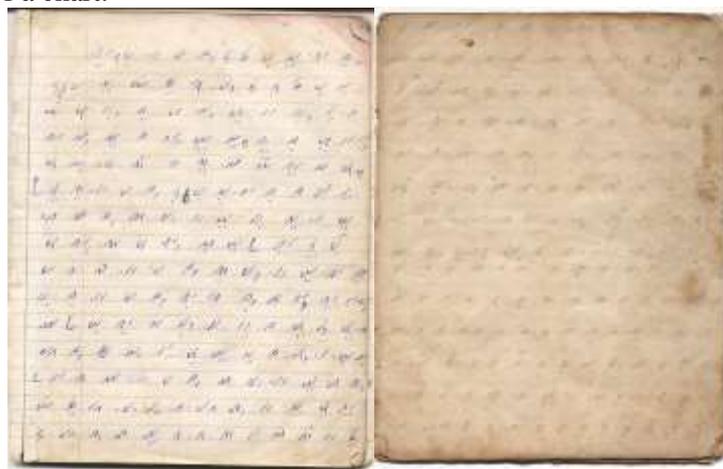
¹³ *Rejung* is a kind of *pantun*; each couplet generally consists of 5 to 8 syntactic units and has rhyme; the *rejung* was delivered in a friendly manner between bachelors and girls in traditional dance at weddings in the Serawai ethnic group.

¹⁴ *Kayiak betarang* (Serawai) or *bekayekan* (Pasemah) is a traditional Serawai/Pasemah ethnic ceremony, which brings girls before adolescents (aged 9-11 years) to the river with the intention of being purified; the ceremony was led by a *dukun* (woman), covering a series of activities (a) bathing (purifying), (b) dressing traditionally, (c) dancing, and (d) enjoying meals with family and invitations; at each stage, the *dukun* reads a *mantra* (spell); the *dukun* is a *dukun* who helps/assists the birth of the child (cf. Sarwono 2014b).

related: α copy of β , or γ copy of α , or α copy of β , or α and β copy of γ , or α , β , and γ copies of λ . The internal evidence of the text shows that α , β , and γ are transcription of the text in oral corpus, or of the text in the social practices corpus, or even the three are the texts about social practices. *Rejung* text in α , β , and γ is found in oral corpus and in *tari adat*.¹⁵ This fact proves that the scribe of the α , β , and γ write down the *rejung* he learned or obtained and mastered through oral tradition and through social practice *merejung* and *tari adat* at the wedding fest.

Such phenomenon is very common in ulu tradition in Bengkulu. More than 16 manuscripts which contains the same text, namely traditional medical treatment, ten of which are stored in the State Museum of Bengkulu and others are preserved as family heirlooms in several villages.¹⁶ Evidently, the manuscripts are not genealogically related, rather each text is written based on the knowledge acquired, learned and mastered by the scribe through his experience and practice of traditional medical treatment. Characteristically, the text is different in the number and type of disease written, although the structure of the texts is the same (beginning with the mention of the disease, then the characteristics of the disease, plants that can be used as medicine, how to mix the medicinal plants, and how to treat them). There is not enough evidence to establish that the texts are copies of one another so that they are genealogically related.

Similarly, the examples above are two manuscripts of **JAL 02** (from the village of Muara Timput, Semidang Alas Subdistrict, Seluma District) and **BAH 01** (from the village of Napal Jungur, Sukaraja District, Seluma District). Both of these manuscripts have the same content, ie *sifat 20*. **JAL 02** and **BAH 01** are written by different people at different times and places. According to Jalil, (the owner of **JAL 02**), this manuscript was written by Azni (Jalil's father-in-law) in the 1950s. At that time Azni was preparing his departure to Mecca to perform the Hajj. The **BAH 01** was written by Bahud's parents (owner of the manuscript) around the 1960s, according to Bahud. The two texts have similarities in their contents, namely *sifat 20*. The difference lies in the structure of the narrative. The JAL 02 text begins with an explanation that the *sifat 20* is divided into 4: *napsiya*, *salabiya*, *makni*, and *makniya* and explanations of each *sifat*. Then, the explanation of the nature of nature 20 is include in the syahadat tauhid *la ilaha illa allah*. The final part of the JAL 02 text contains topics about *jalan atikat*, *mandi taubat*, and *doa-doa*. Meanwhile, the text narration of BAH 01 begins with an explanation of the characteristics of *sifat wujud*, *kidam*, *baka* (and so on) along with the arguments of the Koran chapter and verse which are based on it, ending with an explanation that the nature of the *sifat 20* is included in the syahadat tauhid *la ilaha illa allah* in the form of a chart.



One page of **JAL-02**, sifat 20

one page of **BAH-01**, sifat 20

¹⁵ In *tari adat*, bachelors and girls dance in pairs and sing the *rejung* in a reciprocate manner (Sarwono 2014; Sarwono, Rahayu, Purwadi 2017).

¹⁶ The manuscripts are MNB 07.01, MNB 07.09, MNB 07.15, MNB 07.19, MNB 07.28, MNB 07.45, MNB 07.56, MNB 07.71, MNB 07.83, MNB 07.104, MNB 07.123 (preserved in the State Museum of Bengkulu), and ASR 02, ASR 03, ASR 04, ASR 05 (belongs to Asrip family in Lubuk Lagan village, Talo District, Seluma Regency; and BAH 01 (belongs to Bahud family in Napal Jungur village, Sukaraja District, Seluma Regency).

The examples above show conclusively that the texts in the manuscripts are ‘written’ and not copied from another (written) texts existed. The author does not copy the text from the available manuscript, but writes down the text from his “memory” based on actual knowledge and experience regarding the issues he wrote. In other words, the scribe transforms the texts from the oral corpus and the social practices corpus into written form, the manuscript. The ulu texts are, thus, the autographs of the scribe, and the ulu manuscripts are *codex unicus*.

Manuscripts: intertextuality and contextuality

There are quite a number of examples, namely that the texts in ulu manuscripts are fragments. It is often very difficult to understand a text *per se* from a single manuscript. To be able to understand it, the texts need to be placed together and connected with other texts or put them in context; the text is thus intertextual and contextual (Plett 1991, Allen 2000, Teubert 2000). It is also necessary to place the texts together with other texts in a thematic frame so that they can be interpreted and understood in their entirety.

For example, the manuscript of **MNB 07.69** (State Museum of Bengkulu). This text entitled *usuran beumo* ‘spells of paddy planting’. This text will only be able to be understood as a meaningful text if it is connected to another text and placed it in a particular thematic frame. Without doing this, we will only find insignificant pieces of text. We understand that this text relates to the rite of planting rice fields after we relate this text to oral texts and other manuscripts (for example with the oral text of *kindun paddy* and the origin of the paddy text) and place them in the context of the rite of rice cultivation.

Similarly, the **MNB 07.91** (State Museum of Bengkulu), the text entitled *caro ngambiak madu sialang* “the manner of nyialang”. The text consists of 4 parts. The first part starts with *mating sambil badunday, muji siyalang*; the second part begins with a sentence *puji, madunday*; the third part begins with a sentence *puji madu*;, and the fourth part begins with *lalu dipuoh, dundayo*. It is very difficult to understand and explain comprehensively this text *per se*. However, when this text is linked to, for example the origin of honey, and is placed in the context of the rite of *sialang*, we can fully understand this text.

We can find many more examples which shows that the texts in the ulu manuscripts characteristically fragmented, and are only possible to be fully understood if they are placed in intertextuality and contextual frame. Its meaning, thus, resides in connection with other texts, in their context and in the actions of the people of the real social practice (cf. Jones dan Norris 2005, 4).

Manuscripts and Social Practices

Manuscripts are products, but also the process of production and distribution of texts at once. As illustrated above, the texts in the ulu manuscripts are ‘writing about’ and not ‘copy of’ the previous text. The scribe wrote (again, not copying) the text learned and mastered from the oral corpus and the corpus of social practices in its cultural environment. Different from ‘copying’, the process of writing text contains an act of interpreting (cf. Sebeok 2001, 8) the texts maintained both in the oral corpus and in the corpus of social practices. ‘Writing’ in the sense of ‘interpreting’ contains the understanding that the scribe re-communicates or reconstructs the meaning and understanding that at the level of social practice has been known and carried out by individuals in their cultural groups.

Karakteristik manuskrip ulu dengan teks-teks yang fragmented memiliki signifikansinya di sini. Mengingat teks-teks pengetahuan budaya dan praktik-praktik social telah menjadi pemahaman kolektif, maka ketika menuliskan teks scribe tidak perlu menuliskan semua detailnya. Scribe hanya perlu menuliskan bagian teks atau baian peristiwa suatu praktik social. Gejala ini dapat dipahami. Sebab, suatu teks yang ditulis berdasarkan peristiwa aktual tidak akan sama persis dengan peristiwa aktual yang bersangkutan. Di samping itu, ketika menuliskan kembali suatu peristiwa aktual, seorang penulis akan menuliskannya hal-hal yang menurut si penulis manuskrip

penting disampaikan; penulis akan merangkum, memperluas, melengkapi atau menghilangkan bagian-bagian tertentu.¹⁷

The characteristics of ulu manuscripts with fragmented texts have significance here. Considering that the texts of cultural knowledge and social practices have become collective understanding, then when writing the text the scribe does not need to write down all the details. Scribe only needs to write the part of the text or the part of event of a social practice. These phenomenon can be understood. Because, a text written based on actual events will not be exactly the same as the actual event in question. In addition, when writing a text or social practice, the scribe will only write down the things important according to him; the scribe will summarize, expand, complete or eliminate certain parts of the text. In this degree, text in the manuscripts, thus, constitutes a certain degree of social practice.

Conclusion

In the ulu's writing tradition there is not enough evidence of text transmission, namely that the texts are derived from the copying process. The most common phenomenon is text transformations, namely that ulu texts are derived from the text maintained in oral traditions or in social practices in the community. In this connection, the ulu manuscripts are characteristically codex unicus. Furthermore, ulu manuscripts are written based on the understanding and interpreting of cultural phenomena both preserved in oral tradition and maintained in social practice. The difference between the ulu texts and the oral texts or the texts in social practice regarding a cultural issue indicate that the scribe interpreted the cultural phenomena in oral tradition and in social practice. Manuscripts and texts are not intended as objective recordings of cultural knowledge in oral traditions or of it in social practice events, but are intended as a reconstruction of certain cultural knowledge or social practices. In the context of writing, the ulu manuscripts are recontextualization of certain cultural knowledge and of certain social practices. Through the manuscript, the scribe presents cultural knowledge and the reality of certain social practices at another level and context. In such sense, the manuscripts and the texts are discourse and social practices as well.

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¹⁷ "A narrative never provides a perfect copy of the reality constituting its subject. A person who narrates what has happened to him will always summarize, expand, embellish, and leave out certain aspects of his experience." (Herman and Vervaeck 2005, 14).

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MANUSCRIPTS

State Museum of Bengkulu

MNB 07.01
 MNB 07.09
 MNB 07.15
 MNB 07.18
 MNB 07.19
 MNB 07.30
 MNB 07.45
 MNB 07.56
 MNB 07.69
 MNB 07.70
 MNB 07.71
 MNB 07.104
 MNB 07.123

Heirlooms of Asrip Family (Lubuk Lagan Village of Seluma District)

ASR-02
 ASR-03
 ASR-04
 ASR-05

Heirlooms of Bahud Family (Napal Jungur Village of Seluma District)
BAH-01

Heirlooms of Jalil Family (Muara Timput Village of Seluma District)
JAL-02