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Architecture as an Element of Malay Intelligentsia**

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The Relationship between Astronomy and Architecture as an Element of Malay Intelligentsia

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Abstract

Islam has been very influential in shaping societal developments in the Malay world. Such an influence manifests in various aspects of their lives, one of which can be clearly seen in several influential works carried out by Malay intellectuals in a number of fields. Old Malay manuscripts that deal with many Islamic aspects of knowledge has become a great legacy left by esteemed Malay religious scholars and intellectuals that serves as a testimony of the spread of Islam to the Malay world. Against such a backdrop, this study was carried out to examine the positive (good) and negative (bad) signs associated with Islamic months that helped Malays decide the appropriate months in which houses should be built. The study was based on a mixed-method approach based on a quantitative method and a qualitative method to help yield empirically reliable findings. The corpus-based analysis was the main analysis used by focusing on significant lexical values and concordant synthesis to highlight the good and bad signs associated with Islamic months. The researchers selected five (5) manuscripts that belonged to a corpus called *Petua Membina Rumah*. The analysis showed 50% of the Islamic months had negative signs while 42% of such months had positive signs. The remaining 8% had a mix of positive and negative signs. In addition, there were some instances involving a combination of positive and negative signs. Such occurrences provide an interesting view of the impact of signs on the Malay society, especially on its civilization. These significant findings highlight not only the Islamic months deemed suitable for building houses but also the thinking of Malay scholars in shaping the civilization of the Malay world.

Keywords: Corpus statistics, Islamic months, lexicon, Malay manuscripts, Malay world.

Introduction

Syed Hussein Alatas (1977) states that a person who has the characteristic of ‘an intelligentsia or a scholar’ will be able to discharge his or her responsibility by contributing ideas, and the scholarly thinking that he or she has can help address issues and problems confronting many societies. Malay authors’ or writers’ ‘intelligentsia’ characteristic has been recorded in many Malay manuscripts, which highlights all activities carried out by the Malay society. Such manuscripts served as the main source of information of old Malay societies to transmit moral values explicitly and implicitly (Ding Choo Ming, 2016). More importantly, such manuscripts contain knowledge regarding cultural practices, stories, thinking, and civilizational philosophy, which were recorded through words to highlight specific meanings and ideas. The functions of such words can be examined through the relationships in a form of chained words in a particular sentence. To date, linguistics experts have examined several rare Malay manuscripts to unearth socio-cultural elements that can help highlight the intellectual and civilizational characteristics of Malays.

In this study, the researchers examined a number of manuscripts, designated as MSS741, MSS1415, MSS1521, MSS1849, and MSS2001, which had been translated from Jawi to Romanized texts. Essentially, these selected manuscripts contain information concerning the positions of lands, the appropriate days and months to build houses, and elements pertaining to social norms, beliefs, anthropology, and religion.

Based on the elaboration and transliteration of the chapter ‘Hari dan bulan mendirikan rumah,’ Al-Ahmadi (2016) asserts that the old Malays would build their homes by focusing on certain months that were supposed to have either good or bad signs as follows:

- a) The month of Muharram that brings diseases.
- b) The month of Safar that brings fortunes.
- c) The month of Rabiulawwal that indicates a sign of the impending death of the owner.
- d) The month of Rabiulakhir that brings contentment to the owner of a house.

After the advent of Islam in the Malay world, religious scholars who helped spread the religion also brought with them the knowledge of Astronomy that provided important guidelines for religious rituals and living requirements of the old Malay society. Thus, it becomes clear that Malay manuscripts that prescribe the appropriate times (months) to build houses had a strong relationship with spiritual and cultural characteristics of old Malay societies that were deeply rooted in Islamic teachings (Al-Ahmadi, 2016). In this regard, Vosooghi (2018) argues that the relationship between geography and Islamic astronomy is deeply intertwined in such old manuscripts. Likewise, Man et al. (2012) assert that in dealing with certain sharia issues, such as determining the times of obligatory prayers, the beginning of each Islamic month, and the direction of Mecca, Muslim communities will rely on astronomy. From the perspective of Islamic knowledge discipline, King (2004), a renowned scholar of the civilization and the history of Islamic astronomy, divides the discipline of Islamic knowledge of astronomy into two categories, namely Islamic folk astronomy and Islamic mathematical astronomy.

According to Aizan Ali @ Mat Zin, Khadijah Ismail, and Abdul Niri (2015), ‘Islamic astronomy’ (a term coined by prefixing the word ‘Islam’ to the word ‘astronomy is the discipline of knowledge that examines the heavens and celestial entities based on the Islamic paradigm. More specifically, such knowledge discipline examines heavenly bodies and entities based on several aspects as follows: (a) their creation and existence, (b) their physical and metaphysical characteristics, (c) their relationships with the Creator, (d) their applications in religious rituals, and (e) their utilization for the development of good manners. In building homes, the Malays

will ponder deeply in their every move or action that they take through a process that focuses on the good tidings associated with certain Islamic months. According to Tenas (2013), the wisdom, acumen, and insightful thinking of Malays are closely related to their holistic visionary thinking. They focus not only on worldly affairs but also on matters after death. Premised on this context, this study was carried out to examine the trend of development of Malay civilization with respect to building homes in certain Islamic months that bring good blessings.

Research Methodology

This study was based on a mixed-method approach involving a quantitative method and a qualitative method, which was applied to a corpus statistical method. Such a method can help researchers to analyze data by referring to the statistics of words contained in a word list (McEnergy, Xiao, and Tono, 2006), which is essentially a lexical representation of textual data (O’Keeffe and McCarthy, 2012). In this study, the researchers focused on several manuscripts of an old Malay corpus called *Petua Membina Rumah*, which were designated as MSS1415, MSS1521, MSS1849, MSS2001 dan MSS741. These selected manuscripts were based on the translated versions of the manuscripts made by Abdul Rahman Al-Ahmadi (2016). Overall, such a manuscript had 6,081 word tokens, with 911 different words and the ratio of type and token being 15.00. Data were generated using *WordSmith*, a widely used application for linguistic statistics, which owes to its high readability of Romanized characters. In addition, the data cleaning process was carried out by focusing on texts, not on time tables, prayers, and others that could be read by the corpus software. Cleaned Romanized texts were saved in the plain text format to facilitate the data-generation process. Table 1.0 summarizes the number of word tokens, different words, and the ratio of type and token.

	MSS1415	MSS1521	MSS1849	MSS2001	MSS741	Overall
The number of word tokens.	673	933	734	214	3,527	6,081
The number of different words.	188	358	212	79	668	911
The ratio of types and tokens.	27.98	38.45	28.92	37.26	18.96	15.00

Table 1.0 *The number of word tokens, different words, and the ratio of type and token*

A word list was generated by *Wordsmith* for all the data related to the Malay manuscripts. A list of word frequencies was made the base for various analyses of frequencies using various statistical methods. In the study of corpus-based languages and linguistics, data are based on generated lists of word frequencies. Typically, an empirical analysis will be carried out and its findings are discussed from the perspective of the science of corpus statistics, such that data could be tested to examine their falsifiability, simplicity, completeness, and integrity (Hunston, 2002). A lexicon can be examined to determine the size of its statistical values (large, moderate, and small), which helps determine their specific implications. The emergence of a nominal lexicon can highlight complex meanings (Fontaine, 2017). As such, the focus of this study was on the lexicon of months that emerged nominally, which implicitly helped reveal their complex meanings. Table 2.0 summarizes the ranking of the lexicon of months that was represented in the data of the *Petua Membina Rumah* corpus. The analysis of the word frequencies showed the manuscripts of MSS741 (125) and MSS2001 (5.61) had the highest raw and relative frequencies for the word ‘month,’ respectively. Table 2.0 shows the rankings, raw frequencies, and relative frequencies of the manuscripts for the word ‘month’ in the selected manuscripts.

Manuscript	Ranking	Raw frequency	Relative frequency
MSS1415	14	14	2.08
MSS1521	13	11	1.18
MSS1845	10	16	2.18
MSS2001	4	12	5.61
MSS741	3	125	3.54

Table 2.0 *The rankings, raw frequencies, and relative frequencies of the manuscripts for the word 'month'*

The pattern of the word 'month' in the selected corpus

After examining the list of frequencies, the lexicon of the word 'month' was referred to as a concordance to highlight the contexts and patterns of such a word. In addition, relevant concordances were generated using a sub-window of *WordSmith*. As revealed by the analysis of concordances, the word 'month' often collocated with certain Islamic months, such as *Syaaban*, *Zulkaedah*, *Zulhijjah*, *Rabiulawwal*, *Safar*, and *Muharram*, highlighting an interesting implication on the function and meaning of such a word based on the varying contexts in the corpus. Table 3.0 summarizes the signs associated with the Islamic months in the selected corpus.

Months	Islamic months	No. of tokens	Sign
1	Muharram	8	Negative/ Bad
2	Safar	8	Positive/ Good
3	Rabiulawwal	8	Negative/ Bad
4	Rabiulakhir	8	Negative and Positive
5	Jamadilawwal	2	Positive/ Good
6	Jamadilakhir	9	Negative/ Bad
7	Rejab	8	Negative/ Bad
8	Syaaban	1	Positive/ Good
9	Ramadhan	8	Positive/ Good
10	Syawal	8	Negative/ Bad
11	Zulkaedah	8	Negative/ Bad
12	Zulhijjah	7	Positive/ Good

Table 3.0 *The signs associated with the Islamic months in the selected corpus*

As summarized in Table 3.0, 50% of the Islamic months had negative signs and 42% of such months had positive signs. The remaining 8% had a mix of positive and negative signs. In addition, there were some instances involving a combination of positive and negative signs. Such occurrences provide an interesting view of the impact of signs on the Malay society, especially on its civilization.

Analysis of the Corpus

At this stage, the researchers performed a microscopic analysis on the month of *Safar* in the selected corpus. The analysis of the five selected manuscripts showed the collocation of such a month are *rumah baik alamat beroleh*, *rumah nescaya empunya rumah yang maha baik*, *banyak beroleh hartanya*, *rumah baik*, and *selamat*, all of which indicated a positive sign. Table 4.0 shows the good signs of particular Islamic months to build houses, which were deemed appropriate according to the thinking of the Malays at that time, which had been recorded in the corpus of manuscripts MSS741, MSS1849, MSS2001, and MSS1419.

No.	The good signs in the month of Safar:	Manuscript:				
		MSS741	MSS1845	MSS2001	MSS1521	MSS1419
1	Acquiring wealth	√				
	Acquiring more wealth			√		
	Acquiring extreme wealth					√

2	Safe	√			
3	Acquiring more benefits	√			
4	Acquiring assistants	√	√		
5	Acquiring sustenance		√		
6	Acquiring knowledge			√	
7	Acquiring less benefits				√

Table 4.0 *The good signs of building houses in the month of Safar as recorded in the selected manuscripts*

Conclusion

In this study, the lexicon of the word ‘month’ was carefully examined by focusing on the concordance of such a word. The findings showed the existence of positive and negative signs (values) associated with the months of the Islamic calendar, which is adopted in the Malay world, in building their homes. Evidently, these findings highlight the cosmological thinking of Malays in the home-building process that has spiritual values and meticulous building elements. The refined thinking, belief, and religion of the Malay society of the past era served as a central pillar that guided them to live with greater harmony, which helped reflect the rich Malay civilization. Such findings can have a profound impact on the social development of today’s societies such that people can examine the positive and negative values or signs of the environment in which they live, which can serve as guidelines to help them make proper decisions before embarking on certain endeavors.

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