

Research Article

Al-I'tiraf as a Representation of Repentance and Spirituality in Classical Islamic Literature

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Abstract

The poem Al-I'tiraf by Abu Nawas is a poem with the theme of repentance that has been widely recognized and sung by Muslims across generations. However, the poem Al-I'tiraf is not just a poem of repentance, but also a document of civilization that reveals the dynamics between religious norms and freedom of expression. This study focuses on a brief introduction to Abu Nawas himself, the role of poets in the Abbasid era, linguistic and rhetorical analysis, religious norms and freedom of expression in this poem, and the humanist values contained therein. The study will examine how these elements can be combined effectively in the poem, and how these elements can have a strong influence on the emotions of the readers or listeners of the poem.

Keywords: al-i'tiraf, abu nawas, history of islamic civilization, poems of repentance.

INTRODUCTION

The Abbasid Caliphate, which lasted more than five centuries from 750-1258, is known as the golden age of Islam. Where at that time, science, art, and philosophy reached the peak of glory. However, in this context, literature was not only used as entertainment, but could also be a means of expression, reflection, and some were even used as political tools.

During the Abbasid era, there was one of the most iconic poets who was famous for his humor and wit, none other than Abu Nawas. Al-I'tiraf is one of the best poems



he ever wrote. This poem tells about the confession of human sins to God, and the request for forgiveness from God. The human admits that he feels unworthy of being an inhabitant of heaven, but he is also not strong enough to endure the torment of hellfire. This poem is one of the most popular prayers and dhikr among Muslims. (Hunaini and Akastangga, 2020)

This Al-I'tiraf poem is a lamentation poem that is able to represent the voice of the hearts of many Muslims, until now. Because from time to time, this poem will always be relevant and there will always be people who feel as Abu Nawas wrote in the Al-I'tiraf poem. (Zarawaki, 2022)

This article aims to analyze in depth the relationship between the Al-I'tiraf poem and the history of Islamic civilization, where this poem is one form of development of Arabic literature and also how religious thought influences the spiritual expression of the poem.

With this article, it is hoped that we can understand the Al-I'tiraf poem and its influence in the classical Islamic era or the modern Islamic era like today, as well as understand the elements of spiritualism contained in it.

Formulation of the problem

1. What were the roles of poets during the Abbasid Dynasty?
2. What are the linguistic and rhetorical elements in the Al-I'tiraf poem?
3. How can the dialogue of norms and freedom of expression relate in the poem Al-I'tiraf?
4. What are the humanist values contained in the Al-I'tiraf poem?

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method. The primary data or main data in this study is the text of "Al-I'tiraf" by Abu Nawas itself, while the secondary data is the result of reading from various sources of articles and journals available on the internet and related to this poem and the history of Islamic civilization as a whole.

The analytical method applied is a combination of linguistic and rhetorical analysis of the Al-I'tiraf poem itself, as well as analysis of the cultural and religious aspects that have a major influence on the poem.

The combination of these methods aims to present easy-to-understand analysis results regarding the elements of spiritualism contained in the poem and related to religious norms and the history of Islamic civilization.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. A Glimpse of Abu Nawas

Abu al-Nuwas al-Hasan bin Hani' al-Hakami, or Abu Nawas is one of the poets of classical Islamic literature. Born around 756 in the city of Ahbaz, Persia, and died in 814. He was buried in Syunizi, the heart of Baghdad.

During his 58 years of life which coincided with the revolutionary and golden age of the Abbasid dynasty, Abu Nawas created many poems or verses with various themes ranging from love themes, liquor poems, to satirical and humorous poems. (Kumparan)

Abu Nawas is one of the greatest Arab poets and the greatest poet of classical

literature. His father, Hani al-Hakam, was a member of the military legion of Marwan II, while his mother, Jalban, was a Persian woman who worked as a woollen washer. Abu Nawas learned many things from different teachers, such as when studying Arabic literature he studied with Abu Zaid al-Ansari and Abu Ubaidah, and when studying the Koran he studied with Ya'qub al-Hadrami. As for studying Hadith, he studied with Abu Walid bin Ziyad, Muktamir bin Sulaiman, Yahya bin Said al-Qattan, and Azhar bin Sa'ad as-Samman. (Khusna, 2018).

B. The Role of Poets in the Abbasid Dynasty

During the Abbasid Dynasty, an era also known as the golden age of Islam, science and literature developed rapidly. Even poets, especially those close to the palace, played a crucial role.

The Abbasid Dynasty was a dynasty after the Umayyad Dynasty.

The peak of popularity of the Abbasid dynasty was during the time of Caliph Harun Al-Rasyid (786 AD-809 AD) and his son Al-Ma'mun (813-833 AD). The assets held by Caliph Harun Al-Rasyid were used for social purposes such as: educational institutions, health, hospitals, scientific education, and culture and literature during the Abbasid era. (Dahlan and Bariyah, 2020)

However, literature at that time was not only used for entertainment, because there was also some literature that contained political propaganda.

Some poets became the mouthpieces of the caliphs and political propaganda. They were tasked with praising the caliphs and rulers, glorifying their policies, to build their positive image in the eyes of the people.

However, poets also served to record history and social life. As unofficial recorders of important events, court life, and social dynamics. Through the poems they created, there is a picture of values, customs, conflicts, and social criticism at that time.

There are also poets who use their works as entertainment, like the function of literature in general. Although there are some literatures that contain elements of humor and satire.

At this time there were many conflicts between religious groups, triggered by fanaticism towards each group and tribe, causing instability in the political situation. Because many poems are influenced by the culture and social conditions that occurred at that time, so the poems of that era indirectly describe and record various problems of life, social, and culture. (Hinduan, Tohe, and Huda, 2020)

C. Linguistic and Rhetorical Analysis in the Poem Al-I'tiraf

1. Linguistic Analysis

Abu Nawas uses very strong and straightforward diction, allowing the message of repentance to be conveyed directly and touchingly.

For example, in the sentence "My Lord, I am not worthy to enter Paradise". The words "not worthy" are a very honest and humble expression.

Then in the sentence "And not strong enough to withstand the fire of Hell". The word "أَفْوَى لَا" (not strong) indicates despair and helplessness.

Then, there is repetition of phrases and sentence structures, aimed at emphasizing the message and creating a strong rhythm, as well as deepening the impression of regret and plea.

Such as the repetition of the pattern "...و لا" (and not...) which describes inability or unworthiness. Also the repetition of words such as "ذنوب" (sins) or "أنت" (You) in the

context of confession and hope in God.

This poem is also dominated by first person pronouns such as "أنا" (I/me) to show personal recognition. This also shows that this poem is truly a very sincere expression of the heart of an individual.

The sentence structure used also tends to be short, but dense and parallel, creating a harmonious flow that is easy to follow.

For example, in the sentence "So grant me repentance and forgive my sins" and the sentence "For verily You are the Forgiver of great sins"

2. Rhetorical Analysis

The word rhetoric comes from the word rhetoric. Rhetoric is part of linguistics, especially the science of speech construction. The scope of rhetoric: Monologika, Dialogika and Speaking Techniques. Monologika is the science of the art of speaking in a monologue, where only one person speaks. (Abdullah, 2009)

There is a sharp contrast in the poem, such as the weak and helpless state of oneself in stark contrast to the nature of God who is the Most Great and Most Forgiving. This contrast is very effective in building emotional tension which then subsides with the hope of Divine grace.

Then there is a direct request or prayer to Allah using the address "إلهي" (My Lord) or "إلهي يَا" (O My Lord) to show total surrender and direct communication to Allah.

This poem also has an emotional appeal with the recognition of vulnerability, fear especially fear of hell, and great hope for mercy and forgiveness from God. All these elements are combined to create a touching poem.

D. Dialogue between Religious Norms and Freedom of Expression in the Poem Al-I'tiraf.

Religious norms are norms that are born based on belief in God Almighty and everything is determined by Him. Religious norms in Islam consist of five basic rules, namely halal, haram, wajib, sunnah, makruh and mubah. (Sirajuddin, 2015)

Freedom of expression is part of human rights which is based on general principles, where humans are given the freedom to express anything based on their thoughts and beliefs. (Royani, 2015)

Spiritually, Al-I'tiraf's poetry is a concrete manifestation of obedience to religious norms, through the concepts of confession of sin, repentance, and a request for God's forgiveness.

This poem is also widely accepted by the Muslim community, even now it has been used as a prayer and dhikr. This shows an understanding and tolerance of individual complexity.

Al-I'tiraf also provides space for the expression of complex human emotions such as regret, fear, humility, and hope. Showing that there is still room for humans to admit sin and weakness.

The inner struggle in this poem is expressed honestly without internal censorship that prevents the recognition of mistakes. Religious norms such as the concept of forgiveness and repentance are solutions and resolutions to the problems of this inner struggle.

E. The values of humanism in Islam in the Al-I'tiraf poem

Humanism is a philosophical school where humans can freely develop all the potential and abilities they have, where humans are reminded of their existence and position and responsibility in life. The existence of religion here is very important to reflect on because religion has the same goal. (Nurjanah, 2018)

The values of humanism in the poem Al-I'tiraf are closely related to the honest recognition of human weakness and fragility. Recognizing that mistakes and shortcomings are inseparable from the human condition, and are realities that need to be faced. All humans have the potential to make mistakes and sin, but the door to repentance is always open. This recognition of weakness is the first step towards self-purification and awareness of absolute dependence on God.

This poem also contains deep hope for God's mercy and forgiveness, reflecting the belief in humans to be able to change and return to their pure nature. It also emphasizes that every individual has the potential to improve themselves and can rise from their mistakes, regardless of their past. It also has high and inherent optimism that God is All-Forgiving and will always accept His servants.

This poem is also a personal monologue that is honest and sincere, where humans express their inner turmoil without hypocrisy. Like prayers in Islam which are often personal, and allow humans to communicate with God from the depths of the most sincere heart.

The main message in this poem is the emphasis on divine mercy and forgiveness, believing that God's mercy and forgiveness are limitless. Relating to the attributes of God such as Al-Ghafur (The Most Forgiving), Ar-Rahman (The Most Gracious), and Ar-Rahim (The Most Merciful) where all these attributes provide great hope for humans to be able to improve themselves without having the burden of guilt.

It is also shown that humans can and have the right to immediately kneel and pray to God. Humans are caliphs on earth and have a noble position before God, allowing them to immediately ask for help and repent.

CONCLUSION

Abu Nawas is one of the leading classical Islamic literature poets. He wrote the poem "Al-I'tiraf" which contains confession of sins and a request for forgiveness from God. He lived in the Abbasid Dynasty, Islamic literature, science, and philosophy at that time were in their golden age.

Linguistically, this poem has strong diction, there is repetition, uses first person pronouns, and the sentence structure used tends to be short but dense and parallel. Rhetorically, this poem has a long contrast, contains a request or prayer directly to God, and has a strong emotional appeal.

This poem also contains religious norms but still shows freedom of expression. Although it shows religious obedience in the form of confession, the inner struggle in this poem is presented honestly.

The humanist values in this poem are also very strong, such as the awareness that humans will not be free from sin, human hope for God's mercy, sincere personal monologues, emphasis on divine forgiveness, and the right of humans to ask God and improve themselves.

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