

ELEMENTS OF *DAKWAH* AND LOCAL WISDOM OF THE BAJAUS IN THE ANTHOLOGY OF POETRY *ILTIZAM*

*(Unsur Dakwah dan Kearifan Tempatan Orang Bajau dalam
Kumpulan Puisi Iltizam)*

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Abstract

Iltizam is an anthology of poetry produced by Zubir Osman in 2015, in his effort to deliver poems with the element of *dakwah* or propagation of Islam and to showcase local wisdom, in particular that of the Bajau ethnic group in Sabah. This article focuses on 59 selected poems in the anthology that contain the elements of *dakwah* and local wisdom. The discussion in this article focuses on the *dakwah* element which is portrayed in and linked to the culture, way of life and nature of the Bajau people. The *dakwah* approach is the principle contained in the Malay methodology theory which has been used to explore the *dakwah* aspect while the utilitarian approach is used to examine local wisdom characteristics which reflect the heritage and identity of the Bajaus

in Sabah. This analysis of *Iltizam* selected poems finds that the poems with the Islamic element not only involve the writer's imaginative capability and creativity but they also become effective vehicles for dissemination to the public. It can be concluded that *Iltizam* presents the *dakwah* element and local wisdom of the Bajau people through the poetic verses as a manifestation Of the world view and beliefs of its society.

Keywords: Bajau ethnic group, *Iltizam*, poetry, local wisdom, *dakwah* approach, utilitarian approach, Malay methodology theory

Abstrak

Iltizam ialah sebuah antologi puisi karya Zubir Osman yang dihasilkan pada tahun 2015 dalam usahanya untuk menyampaikan puisi-puisi berunsurkan dakwah dan pemaparan kearifan tempatan, khususnya dalam kalangan suku kaum Bajau di Sabah. Makalah ini memberikan tumpuan terhadap 59 buah puisi pilihan dalam antologi puisi Iltizam (2015), yang mengandungi unsur dakwah dan kearifan tempatan. Perbincangan makalah ini secara langsung memberikan tumpuan terhadap unsur dakwah yang dipaparkan dan dikaitkan dengan budaya, cara hidup dan keperibadian suku kaum Bajau. Pendekatan Dakwah merupakan prinsip yang terkandung dalam teori pengkaedahan Melayu dipilih untuk menelusuri aspek dakwah manakala pendekatan gunaan diguna pakai untuk meneliti unsur-unsur kearifan tempatan yang memperlihatkan warisan dan identiti masyarakat Bajau di Sabah. Analisis terhadap puisi pilihan Iltizam (2015) mendapati bahawa puisi berunsurkan Islam bukan hanya melibatkan daya imaginasi dan kreativiti pengarang, malah merupakan wadah penyampai yang berkesan kepada masyarakat. Kesimpulannya, Iltizam (2015) mengetengahkan unsur dakwah dan kearifan tempatan orang Bajau melalui bait-bait puisi sebagai manifestasi pandangan hidup dan kepercayaan masyarakat Bajau sendiri.

Kata kunci: Suku kaum Bajau, Iltizam, puisi, kearifan tempatan, pendekatan gunaan, pendekatan dakwah, teori pengkaedahan Melayu

INTRODUCTION

The 1980's saw the development of Malay literature containing Islamic elements in a variety of genres such as the novel, short story and poetry. Poetry is a branch of modern Malay literature which represents a poet's creativity. Poetry containing Islamic elements is viewed as a significant development in the attempt to provide a positive impact on universal humanity. Local wisdom refers to the knowledge acquired in a community from the experiences

of its members as well as its collective knowledge (Kamonthip, 2007:1). Local wisdom is also linked to traditional elements and the practices of the region's society that encompass wisdom, knowledge and teachings such as laws, safety, life, human resource and beliefs (Nyoman Utari, 2008:4).

This study employs the *dakwah* and utilitarian approaches in the effort to explore the *dakwah* aspect and the Bajau society's local wisdom based on 59 selected poems in *Iltizam* (2015). The Bajaus are one of the biggest ethnic groups in Sabah (Yap, 1993:xi). The Bajaus are classified into two groups, namely the Bajaus of the West Coast who are mostly farmers and the Bajau group in the East Coast of Sabah who are well known as fishermen. The early history of the Bajau society comes in various versions, for example through observations by western orientalist such as Frost who stated that he discovered Bajau fishermen all along the east of Borneo Island and it is believed that the fishermen were originally from Johore. (Warren, 1971, p. 65). Local researchers such as Yap (1993, p. 13), classified the Sea Bajaus and the Land Bajaus based on their physical characteristics, the language, way of life as well as customs although both are called Bajau. The sea Bajaus live in areas such as Semporna, Kunak, Lahad Datu and Sandakan. The land Bajaus live in places like Kota Belud and Tuaran. The Sea Bajaus are very close to nature. This closeness influences the society's local wisdom which then forges its own unique identity. The influence of Islam in Nusantara also had an impact on the Bajau community which practiced animism before converting to the Islamic religion. *Iltizam (Commitment)* (2015) is the poet's inspiration to create awareness about Islamic *dakwah* while introducing the identity and culture of the Bajaus as a whole.

HASHIM'S MALAY METHODOLOGY THEORY (1989)

Hashim (1989:60) introduced the Malay methodology theory out of his desire to interpret and delve into literary works that exist in Malay culture by employing a suitable theory. Hashim (1989) felt that it was time Malay literary works that contain Islamic elements be dissected based on new theories that can bring a positive impact to society and at the same time reduce dependence on western theories which are less relevant in the analysis of local works. This theory is based on Malay views related to religion and Malay philosophy of life. Three core aspects of welfare, obedience and manners and the whole way of life is founded on Islamic belief.

The Malay methodology theory is divided into two approaches, that is, the natural approach and the religious approach. The natural approach is based on factors like culture, life and the Islamic religion which is the pillar of the Malay society. Nature is the closest ally of mankind and carries a huge meaning in the lives of the Malays, and is often used as a guide and lesson in proverbs or poems which we use until today. The natural approach is divided into smaller sections, that is, the utilitarian approach, the moral approach and the interpretative approach. The utilitarian approach means everything that is created by Allah SWT has its own role and importance. Similarly, the literary work produced with Allah's permission actually exists for a reason, has an underlying wisdom and its own function. This approach involves intrinsic and extrinsic elements that include the background of its creation, the society, its readers, the author and his ideology. This literary work is viewed as the expression of the writer's feelings about a certain subject that he wants to convey to his society.

This approach is found to be relevant in examining the *Iltizam* anthology (2015) since the Bajau society's life and background are similar to Malay culture. This approach can be used directly to analyse Zubir's poems as they are similar to the Sea Bajau's local wisdom. The religious approach is wholly based on the concept of faith and the Qur'an and hadith (the Traditions). This approach is divided into three supporting theories, that is, the *dakwah* approach, the societal approach and the artistic approach. *Dakwah* according to Asmuni (1983:19) means any activity that is in the nature of an invocation, invitation or call to the people to have faith and believe in Allah SWT in line with the Islamic creed, laws and morals. Othman (2000) defines *dakwah* based on the word *masdar* from the verb *da'a-yad'u* that means invoke, appeal or invite. The word *dakwah* is often used with the word *ilmu* (knowledge) and the word Islam, hence the phrases *ilmu dakwah* and *dakwah Islam* or *al-da'wah al-Islamiyah*. Hashim Awang's Malay Methodology Theory (1989) as a whole is summarised in Figure 1

Based on Figure 1, it is clear that the *dakwah* approach and the applied approach are the two principles contained in Hashim Awang's Malay Methodology Theory (1989). In this article, the *dakwah* approach that is categorized under religious approach has been selected to explore the *dakwah* aspect found in *Iltizam's* selected poems (2015). The utilitarian approach, classified under natural approach is used to examine the local wisdom that showcases the heritage and identity of the Bajau society in Sabah in *Iltizam's* selected poems.

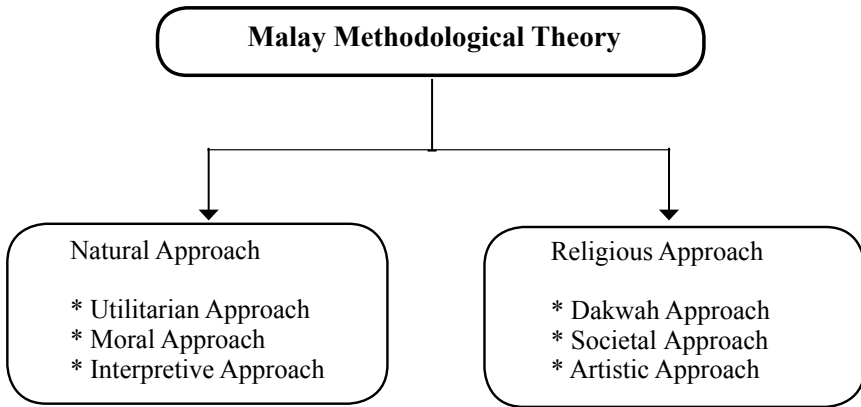


Figure 1 Malay Methodological Theory Hashim Awang (1989).

RESEARCH MATERIAL

Iltizam, the anthology of poems by Zubir, published in 2015 by ITBM (Institute of Translation and Books Malaysia), contains one hundred and fourteen poems that cover various themes such as society, nature, divinity, regret for one's wrongdoing, and acceptance of one's fate. The poems in this anthology are the expression of the writer's feelings in his love for Allah and an attempt to bring the public to reflect on Allah's majesty and greatness. The writer tries to present a unique depiction of the life of his people at the same time emphasizing the Islamic religion as its main foundation. Zubir (2015) is seen as showing the culture, heritage, identity and way of life of his people in a better light so that the reader will better understand the way of life of the Bajaus.

THE ELEMENT OF *DAKWAH* AND LOCAL WISDOM

The process of life experienced by the poet as a member of the Bajau community, is manifested through the verses of his poems. Based on the *dakwah* approach and utilitarian approach, poetry is seen as representing the life experiences, culture, art and heritage of its writer. In fact, the *Iltizam* anthology is the expression of ideas and experiences of its writer who has long been involved in the poetry genre, which should reflect his people's way of life in the future. The Bajaus have begun to learn about literature and the expression of ideas in a more creative form. This level is reached

after a very tough life process, being exposed to various obstacles and challenges through the generations until it became difficult to maintain the nation's identity. Finally, the poet came forward as a member of the Bajau community who tries to express his feelings and inner turmoil through the portrayals in the poems he writes.

“As for the poets, those who err follow them. Have you not seen how they stray in every valley. And how they say which they themselves do not do. Except for those poets who believe and remember Allah much until they succeed. And those who stray will know where they will be sent.

(*Surah as-Syuara'ah* 26: 224-227)

Dakwah in literature refers to the ability of a piece of work to be a vehicle and medium of dissemination to create awareness about the truth and good in Islam. Literary works such as poetry should be more inclined to include themes that deal with social issues in order to provide lessons and guidelines to the public. The poet has the responsibility of creating awareness within society as to Allah's greatness, to redeem oneself of sins, about faith, the creed and other topics in order to encourage people to remember Allah throughout their lives. Allah SWT has stated in the Qur'an about Muslim poets who should act differently from those who stray through the *Surah as-syuara'ah*. Zubir (2015) has put forth the element of *dakwah* in all his poems in an effort to be one of the Islamic poets who advocate good and the truth according to Islamic rules and laws. This is reflected in the following stanza:

*Berterima kasihlah pada alam dan Penciptanya
selama iradat bersamamu
kuduskan hasrat milik tuhan itu
akan kutemu juga jalan
dan berpeganglah pada tali-nya.*

(*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 18)

[Be grateful to the world and its Creator
while together with you
may the wishes be pure unto God
I will discover the path
and hold on to His rope]

Zubir (2015, p. 18), through his poem *Lagu Perahu Dikayuh* (Song of boat being rowed) tries to inculcate patience and gratitude to Allah, the Creator of the world. Human beings should be subservient, obedient and accepting as well as believe in the fate destined to us by Him. As long as mankind follow the straight path, Allah will bless the journey of his creations.

Kudrat tak seindah takdir
benang pengikat tinggal iman cuma
dengan jarum ikhtiar
digotong sebakul penuh sutera tawakkal

(*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 2)

[Strength is not as beautiful as destiny
the only tie that binds is faith
injected with effort
and surrendering one's fate to the Almighty]

The poem *Kudrat* (Strength) (*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 1) is similar to *Lagu Perahu Dikayuh* (*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 18) in that it deals with the virtues of patience and acceptance in overcoming life's challenges. The poet's verses are in line with the *dakwah* approach which encourage the function of literary works as a medium for dissemination of the dos and don'ts in religion to society.

This element is also shown in several other poems such as *Bertelagah* (Fighting) (*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 15) in the following stanza:

*Mari menadah tangan memohon hikmah
Saling penuh sedar diri bertongkat keinsafan
Hidup terlalu singkat*

[Come, open your palms and pray
Together with awareness and supported by regrets
Life is too short]

The poet does his utmost to create awareness among the people about our needs as servants of God and who are accepting of the many trials and challenges in life. Only Allah SWT knows our fate and destiny.

*Demi Tuhan yang memegang nyawaku
tiada kejadian lebih agung
selain penciptaan alam semester*

*Yang bermula dari DUKKHAN
konstant mengembang
mengempar ke seluruh penjuru
mencipta dalam enam masa
dan Dia bersemayam di atas Arasy*

(*Itizam*, 2015, p. 7)

[By Allah, who holds my life in His hands
no better creation except that of the whole universe
starting with DUKKHAN
constantly developing
booming to all corners
creating in six times
and He is enthroned on Arasy]

The above excerpt is known as *Ittakullah* poetry which embodies the concept of *takwa* (to fear or obey Allah). The writer tries to make people aware of the greatness and majesty of the Creator. Allah SWT has the power over our lives, creating every single thing on earth. Another stanza touches on Allah's attributes in detail in the poetic verses. The writer reflects on the oneness of Allah, neither having a child or being one, never sleeps or naps, arranging every natural occurrence flawlessly. Man who is created as His vicegerent on earth should learn from observing Allah's power. The writer succeeds in showing his love for Allah through the description of Allah's attributes of oneness and almighty.

“O mankind, worship your Lord who created you and those before you so that you become the righteous”.

(*Surah al-Baqarah* 2:21)

Allah urges mankind to always worship Him, God who created mankind. *Surah al-Baqarah* verse 21 explains that as Muslims, they are enjoined to obey everything that has been instructed by Him through the Qur'an and hadith. The writer through his poems *Iradatmu* (Your will) and *Pulang Aku Pada-Mu* (I return to You) appeal to mankind to seek Allah's acceptance and guidance to achieve happiness in this world and the hereafter. The elements of *dakwah* are clearly seen in these verses that revolve around themes such as repentance, obedience to Allah and the oneness of Allah. Observe the following verse:

*Berkayuh perahu disubuh hari
menguak rezeki mengutip mutiara hidup
riak ombak puput bayu bukan ujian semu
semua datang membawa dulang pengertian
meminang ketabahan diri
mengahwini pancaroba
meniduri cinta derita yang telanjang
tanpa selimut iman*

(*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 18)

[Rowing the boat in early morn
To earn a living gathering mussels
The waves swayed by the breeze are not the test of a storm
All come bringing lessons
To court courage
To overcome challenges
Sleeping with naked suffering
Without the cover of faith]

The use of the word “perahu” (boat) above, in the poem *Lagu Perahu Dikayuh* (*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 18) is an example of highlighting the identity of the Bajau community that through generations depended on the boat in their lives. The boat is a symbol of the lives of the Bajaus, especially those living in the east coast of Sabah who are reputed to be skilled fishermen and divers. The boat is seen as the main source of earning a living from the sea. This shows how close the writer is with the lives of the Bajau people and it is the core of his identity and shines through the beautiful rendering of his poem. *Perahu*, *Lepa*, *Boggok*, *Bayanan* and *Sappit* are the means of transportation at sea that are synonymous with the lives of the Bajau society. This is manifested by the writer in his poems as an embodiment of the true seaman. The heritage passed on from generation to generation which will never be forgotten by the Bajaus. Typically, the Bajaus not only use the boat as a source of earning a living but also in the traditional past the boat was also the house or place to live for the Bajaus. This poem is seen to be in line with the utilitarian approach that involves both intrinsic and extrinsic elements covering the background of its creation, the society and the writer, all of which enable him to express his feelings about his people which he wants to introduce to the readers.

*Kalau perahu sebesar sabut cuma
jangan takut meredah gelora
kalau dayung buatan kayu seraya hanya
dayung saja sekuat tenaga
siapa tahu dalam dayung hilang arah
ketemu pulau tertanam sejuta harta
berani mengorak berani bersorak
tabah mengira jarak bersama awan mengarak*

(*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 18)

[If the boat is only as big as the husk
do not fear treading the waves
if the oar is only of a wooden plank
just row with all your might
who knows in the oar losing direction
one discovers an island of treasures
the brave one will end triumphant
bravely counting the distance together with the moving clouds]

Zubir (*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 18) in the third stanza writes this poetic expression: “if the boat is only as big as the husk, do not fear treading the waves” as the beginning lines of the third stanza. Poetic expressions, symbolism and pantun are valuable heritage and become the symbol of a society’s identity, a society which values politeness in speech. The Bajaus also value manners and polite behaviour especially in speech and interactions with the society. Poetic and grammatical phrases are the vehicle for conveying what is in the mind and thinking of the society which then is expressed through subtle and refined ways. The writer employs this element to express his feelings in the sincere struggle that his people gain strength and awareness to reach for success. Although strength is limited, one must continue in one’s efforts to gain the objectives in life. Such advice are in accordance with Islamic values which encourage its people to work hard to change their lives for the better, in line with the word of Allah in *Surah ar-Ra’d* verse 11, that is “Allah will not change the fate of a nation until they change what is in themselves”.

Local wisdom is clearly one of the important aspects in his effort to pen the finest poems for his readers. The local wisdom which he writes about include the line of thinking, life philosophy and the principles upheld by the Bajaus. The utilitarian approach emphasises that everything created has its own role. Life experiences finally become a useful message to be passed on to the readers.

*Biar mati anak jangan mati adat
jika mati adat hilang madu umat
kerana hidup bersendi muafakat
diri mandiri sesuai syariat
barulah tercapai makrifat
hingga tersingkap hijab
dan tampaklah hakikat*

Better to lose a child than lose one customs
To lose one's customs means the end of sweet fraternity
Because consensus supports life
The laws suit oneself
Then will *makrifat* be achieved
Even the veil is lifted
And truth is revealed

The poem, "Hakikat" (*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 64) through the expression, "better to lose a child than lose one's customs" is symbolic of the Malay world that colours their lives. The Bajaus acknowledge being under the administration of Malaysia. Therefore, the elements contained in Malay history find a place in their hearts too. Custom is the pulse and pillar of the community, this is what the writer is trying to convey via his poem. The Bajau society is known for bravery and faithfulness to custom and promises. Good seamen are those who possess upright personalities with high moral values. This philosophy of life is also required in Islam in order to produce human beings with noble characteristics as in the following:

*Biar senget jangan rebah
biar tunduk namun tetap menanduk
biar diam namun akal menjelajah
biar di belakang namun idea sentiasa dihadapan
biar derita seketika namun bahagia selamanya
biar terasing namun dekat pada-Nya
biar miskin harta namun kaya gelora batin rasa
biar melangkah namun hasrat melayang sawjana
biar menyimpang namun terbilang*

(*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 64)

[Let us bend but not collapse
let us bow but still attack

let us be silent but the brain soars
let us be at the back but the idea is always in front
let us suffer a while but happy forever
let us be separate but close to Him
let us be poor but rich in heart and soul
let us take steps but intention goes far
let us deviate but be counted]

The phrase “let us bow but still attack” has an underlying meaning. The poet wants the Bajaus to be humble but still be able to defend their principles. These words strike a chord with the Bajau community that is considered to have sacred and spirited values. Let us be the spine as long as we have fruitful and excellent ideas. The difficulties in life faced today does not mean there is no scope or room for success. The Bajau’s philosophy of life emphasizes on toughness and courage as well as to always remember one’s identity and the nation’s that is constantly influencing their lives. This concept is also in line with Islamic values that is to be moderate in all things. Every trial and challenge should be faced by every human being in order to become a devoted servant of Allah.

Dakwah elements are synonymous with the writer. Each poem he wrote in *Iltizam* anthology such as “Kudrat”, “Kucari Jalan”, “Jalan Tak Berhujung”, “Salawat atas Nabi”, “Tawakkal”, “Mati Sebelum Ajal”, “Hakikat”, “Iltizam”, “Tuhan”, “Lelaki Sejati”, “Aku, Tuhan dan Hidup”, “Sesudah Kutahu”, “Tuhan Jangan Tinggak Daku”, “Ittakullah”, “Menanti Dijemput Waktu”, “Mati”, “Trigonometri Cinta”, “Alam”, “Pandoga Salah Tingkah” and many others by Zubir (2015) contain advice and *dakwah* to steer one towards the truth in accordance with the writer’s belief in the Islamic religion.

The intrinsic and extrinsic elements such as culture, the arts and personality of the writer are some of the factors in the writing of poetry that has a cathartic impact on the public.

The writer clearly makes his poetry as a vehicle in the struggle to call people to the right path. The poem, “Pagi Datang Lagi” (Morning Comes Again) (*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 22) depicts the attributes of the chosen prophets such as the wisdom of Moses, the courage of the Prophet Sulaiman, the manners of the Prophet Ismail, the firmness of Prophet Abraham and the greatness of Prophet Muhammad. The stories of these prophets certainly contain many lessons and guidance in life. Abraham who was very devoted to Allah obeyed Him when instructed to slaughter his son, Ismail as decreed by Allah. The sacrifice that he made was solely for religious sake. This is the

story on which Aidil Adha is celebrated in the Muslim history. The poem, “Salawat atas Nabi” (*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 23) also stresses on remembrance of the Prophet Muhammad SAW in the verses describing the birth of the prophet. This poem presents the prophet’s genealogy and his unworldly characteristics. He is known for his forgiving nature, his polite behaviour, and that he possessed only two garments. For him religion was his life. This story is very moving and the writer succeeds in portraying the life of the prophet in a fine and respectful manner. Such moderation should be used as an example by the society which is bent on chasing worldly goods to the extent of forgetting the hereafter. This theme is also present in the poem, “Aku Ingin Jadi Nabi” (I want to be a prophet) (*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 34) where again the writer portrays the lives of Islamic figures such as Uwais al-Qarni, Hasan al-Basri, Al-Ghazali, Rabiatal Adawiyah and Abu Yazid al-Bistami to provide good examples to society.

The poem, “Kucari Jalan” (I am looking for the way) (*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 11) depicts the struggle of a man who is seeking the straight path. Mankind has been made God’s vicegerents on earth who are devoted to Allah and take care of his creations. He has instructed mankind to serve Him always. The relationship between man and Allah is vertical, that is *hablumminallah* and the relationship between man and man is *hablumminanas*. Therefore, mankind is urged to remember Allah at all times and seek the path which will bring him closer to Him.

Allah is the Creator of every single thing on earth and in the hereafter. Allah SWT has the attributes of greatness and majesty. Allah has created the sky, the earth, the sun, the moon and everything that can be discerned by our senses or otherwise. Allah’s greatness and majesty can be felt when humans reflect on the creation of the huge expanse of the earth and all that take place in this world. The natural world such as the waves, heaving seas, the wind and so on are part of the beautiful elements of his poetry that depict the closeness of the Bajaus with the natural environment. The Bajaus are seafarers who are not afraid to interact with nature. The waves are the symbol of trials and tribulations in life. The natural world represents the relationship between traditional Bajaus and their Creator.

“And of his signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your tongues and colours. For in this there are messages indeed for all who are possessed with innate knowledge”.

(*Surah ar-Rum* 30:22)

Surah ar-Rum states that Allah has created every thing which has its own role. The sky and the earth which were created always play their individual roles. The truth is, every sign in this world has proven that Islam is a complete religion and underlines the way of life of the society as a whole.

Although life does not promise success the poet attempts to inject hope especially within the Bajau society to continue to be brave in moving forward to find a better life in the midst of their life journeys. Only those who want to know further will look at each test and challenge as something that motivates in order to live a better life:

*Si pencari kebenaran menaakul
Maha melihat segala tindakan kitaam
Si dungu mengangkut karung bernafsu
Si lalai memperjudikan emas waktu
Sedang tuhan tidak pernah tidur*

(*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 11)

[The seeker of truth reasons
The Almighty sees all our actions
the dumb gathers the bag of *nafs*
the idle wastes the precious time
whereas God never sleeps]

The poet emphasises the message that every suffering and bitterness in life should become a lesson and guide in our everyday lives. The world is our real teacher in order for us to become more advanced and be able to live with the times. The role of the world which is highly important instil a deep feeling of love in us towards God the Creator because we are given the chance to experience the pleasures of being human. This poem clearly depicts two situations that will occur if a human being allows himself to drift without looking for a way to return. Those who make an effort to seek the truth, although falling along the way at times, is a human being who is full of courage and love. A pure soul should be able to balance reason and become a better human being.

The poem “Alam” (Nature) (*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 32) also portrays the relationship between the world and its Creator. The writer tries to portray by nature symbols that every human being should think wisely in living his life. This theme is also presented in the poem “Gelap” (Dark) (*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 43) that depicts the world at night. The gloom and the pitch darkness that

clamps the soul. “Menjerat Mentari” (Trap the Sun) (*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 194) and “Bunga Ilalang” (Ilalang flower) (*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 103) also revolve around nature, containing various stories of sorrow and suffering in a society. “Datang Sudah Suria Pagi” (The Morning Sun Has Risen) (*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 174) and “Cahayaku” (My Light) (*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 113) also use the natural backdrop in its symbolism in the writer’s *dakwah* regarding the importance of nature and its relationship with man. The poem “Moga Bukan Terakhir Dariku” (Hoping it’s not the Last from Me) (*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 172) presents nature elements such as the rainbow, light, stars, night and day. It is clear that the poet uses nature elements in almost ten of his poems in *Iltizam* anthology of poetry (2015).

The poet writes about his hopes and dreams in the poems “Aku Punya Satu Impian” (I have a Dream) (*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 45) and “Ratib Orang Kesurupan” (Recitation of One Possessed) (*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 119) of being able to witness peace and prosperity for human kind. His dream is to see love and living together without being burdened with evil and ignorance. The poems reflect the hopes he keeps in his heart that society can live without an iota of prejudice. With regard to the life of the Bajau society, sometimes there is enmity in their lives which lead to fights that can threaten peace and harmony among the people. It is this hope which he tries to push forward so that society, especially the Bajau society understand their responsibility and roles as members of a society. Peace and prosperity are the things people hunger for in this world. “Dunia Papan Catur” (The World as a Chessboard) (*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 121) is about a society that constantly find fault without practicing tolerance and understanding which eventually would destroy itself. The writer tries to depict the consequences of such a society that find fault among themselves without any attempt to improve their lives as one big unit. The poem, “Puisi Tidak Menyerah” (Poetry Does Not Surrender) (*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 125) on the other hand pictures life in a society that always works towards finding purity in life and meeting the Creator. Social issues such as these can leave a beneficial impact on the readers so that they constantly strive for peace and tolerance in life. This is what Islam stresses on because mankind is created to help each other and cooperate to achieve progress and excellence.

The poem “Menanti Dijemput Waktu” (Waiting for the Appointed Time) (*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 99) is seen as a portrayal in detail of the lives of traditional Bajaus which have been practiced from generation to generation until today. Food such as boiled cassava is the main staple of the Bajaus

and it is the symbol of their identity. Boiled cassava is of sentimental value for the whole Bajau community. Usually this is their breakfast, and it is affordable enough to feed all members of the family even if they are poor. The poet tries to present the reality of life of these seafarers who are destitute. Cassava is considered a staple food as rice is. The daily life of the Bajaus is felt to be incomplete without a variety of seafood. Prawns, fish and dried squid in poetry are symbols of the daily life of these fishermen. These fishermen struggle against the waves to look for food and earn a living for the family. The depiction of their lives by the poet leave a deep impression on the readers. The Bajaus who are living in poverty do not even possess lamps, let alone air conditioners. However, Islam which underlie their life philosophy enable them to be grateful inspite of their poverty and difficult lives. As long as they are physically able, they will go on earning their living. The writer emphasizes the virtues of acceptance of fate and regret for one's wrongdoing in the poem with the deep understanding that whatever trial God gives is within one's capacity to bear. The Bajaus consider that this is what it means to be accepting (*reda*) until the time one meets the Maker. Zubir's poems (2015) are in line with the utilitarian approach, that is they are supported by the notion that part of life experiences have an underlying meaning.

The writer in trying to use poetry as a medium for *dakwah* has not forgotten to talk about the issues of destiny and death as a particular reminder to society. Destiny and death are things that are outside the knowledge of human beings. The poem, "Inna Lillahi Wa Inna Ilaihi Raji'un" (*Iltizam*, 2015:84) urge mankind to do as much good deeds for the final reckoning in the hereafter because death can come at any time. The poem "Mati" (Death) (*Iltizam*, 2015:130) also represents the journey of a person who is nearing death. Only Allah knows the time when death comes. Therefore mankind is encouraged to perform many good deeds and to do good in this world for the final reckoning. The poem "Pulang Aku Kepada-Mu" (I Return to You) (*Iltizam*, 2015:105) revolves around the same theme of urging people to the right path so that the last moments of life will be easier. The poem "Puisi Mu I" (Your Poem I) (*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 51) and "Puisi Mu II" (Your Poem II) (*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 177) are also of the same subject, discussing the final journey to Allah. The writer attempts to present these issues so that the society always remember that the world is a temporary place and the hereafter is the final abode.

“Pandoga Salah Tingkah” (*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 161) is a poem that contains a philosophy of life. *Pandoga* is a Bajau word that represents principles, direction and way of thinking. This poem prompts the reader to be aware that to become a complete human being one must go through various experiences, bitterness, and pain to teach one to become a better human being. “Hoping for rain when you hear thunder, what comes will not even fill the jar” is sarcasm meant to remind the Bajaus not to pin one’s hopes on something that is not certain. In this poem, a good reminder and lesson has been delivered by the poet. Allah SWT has also reminded Muslims to work hard to achieve something followed by prayers and then leaving it in God’s hands.

The writer is also seen as wanting to be close to Allah SWT as part of his effort to coax others towards the truth and to stay away from falsehood. The poem “Aku, Tuhan dan Hidup” (*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 109) is a depiction of sad tale of a Sea Bajau child. This poem definitely contains *dakwah* elements and local wisdom that is garnered from his life journey where he had to face the challenges of living in a city. The poet tries to depict the real situation of these children who are born poor and destitute. The situation is so crippling that they become gum addicts in the alleyways. Looking at the real situation, there are beggars there below the age of twelve. They spend their time begging for sympathy from those who would help especially those who give out money or coins. Nevertheless, the poet slips in some *dakwah* in the form of a fervent hope that Allah look after their welfare and the lives of these people. Its beauty proves that the poet who lives within the Bajau community is able to interpret the condition of this society.

The fine verses of the poem *Aku, Tuhan dan Hidup* clearly shows the poet’s effort to put forth a different interpretation and picture of the life of the Bajaus some of whom are destitute and outcasts of society. Normally, outsiders have a particular view and perception of the Bajaus, especially the Sea Bajaus. This poem is able to invoke an honest portrayal of a section of the Bajau community who are abandoned and who have to face a bitter life’s journey. This portrayal sufficiently provides an interpretation of the conflict of identity and the cynical view of the society towards these children who actually need help and aid to change the lives of their people. Progress and civilization are still far from their reach as the society ignore their existence as a group of people who need help. Allah SWT has urged mankind to fulfil their responsibility towards Him and provide service to those in need.

*Tuhan
bila Kau datang
melihat makhlukmu
dipacu serupa baghal
hilang kendali ini?
Tuhan
jangan tinggal daku
tanpa kendali
tali-Mu yang lurus*

(*Iltizam*, 2005, p. 110)

[God
when you come
and look at your creatures
ridden like the donkey
that lost its bridle
God
do not leave me
without your bridle
Your straight rope]

The poem's ending is shattering because of the hope expressed by the poet to the Creator of the universe. The poet appeals to the Almighty not to abandon him all alone and expresses the desire to be guided back and move with Allah's help. This poem is able to shake the reader's mind and feelings, interpreting the poets thinking on the philosophy of life.

Zubir (2015), through the poem "Lelaki Sejati" (Real Men) (*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 188) emphasizes the concept of *muruwah*, that is, personal pride or honour which is considered a priority for men in the Bajau community. The poet paints a picture of the Bajau men's special qualities, always concerned about *ka'ul, pi'il, akkal* dan *kila-kila* or words, action, thinking and balance in everything that they do. This personal pride is a symbol of men's strength other than the adherence to religion and the beauty of life guided by Islamic laws. Islam also emphasises the concept of *maruah* or morals that should be preserved not only because they are men but also as head of the household and family. This poem clearly emphasizes that which is in accordance with Islamic views that forms the basis of the Bajau society. At a glance, the poem looks simple in arrangement but it embodies a critical and creative line of thinking

This poem is full of *dakwah* elements and local wisdom in order to understand the meaning of humanity itself. Due to his love of language, culture and literature, Zubir's poems are beautiful and meaningful. The rendering of his poems leave a great impact and are written in a unique style. The noble and Islamic values are represented in traditional terms that exist in the poet's mind. This particular poem, apart from exploring the personal pride of a man it is also able to put forth the idea that men should be equally self-effacing. The poet does not forget to give examples from the prophets such as Adam, the angels and other important messages in Islam.

The poems, "Tuhan" (God) (*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 92), "Tidak Menyerah" (Do not surrender) (*Iltizam*, 2015:125), "Kebesaran Maha Indah" (Greatness is Beautiful) (*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 61), "Mati Sebelum Ajal" (Die before one's Time) (*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 62) and "Sebutir Debu" (A speck of Dust) (*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 76) are representative of the writer's awareness of mankind's relationship with God *hablum minallah*. The use of words such as "Your Greatness, Your Will, divine manifestation, revelation, essence, wisdom" show that these poems are used as a medium for *dakwah* to the readers. The poet presents a picture of how small and lowly man is and how he should increase his love for Allah. As a man, he will commit errors and this should be followed by forgiveness, repentance and acceptance. The poet is inclined to portray a society that surrenders itself to God in total in the pursuit of heaven. The poems also took Baitullah as the background, and represent it as the purest place of worship for all levels of society including the Bajau community. This background will give the impression that the Bajau community practices a way of life and culture based on true Islamic guidelines.

At a glance, the poems look simple in arrangement but it contains a critical and creative line of thinking. The poems are filled with the element of teaching and becomes a good premise for understanding the meaning of humanity itself. His love for language, culture and literature makes Zubir (2015) poems beautiful and meaningful. His poetic arrangement leaves a strong impact and has a style of its own. The noble Islamic values are represented by traditional terms that exist in the writer's mind. The Bajau society frequently uses nature as the teacher, but they are still the vicegerents of God who continue to worship Allah as the creator of the entire natural world.

On the whole, these poems bring people closer to Allah in all matters. The world is seen as a temporary place where one does as much good deeds as possible to help him in the hereafter. The poet portrays the true man as one who hopes for Allah's forgiveness so that every step he takes is easier

and blessed. The fires of hell are agonising for those who know. There is an interesting use of the sky and earth metaphor especially because we live between them.

*Aku tenggelam
Dalam kebesaran alam
Merunduk fikiran
Bergetar sukma
Hilang ego
Sirna kesombongan diri
Aku hanya setitis air
Dalam lautan tujuh benua*

[I am drowning
In the vastness of the world
The mind stoops
My heart shakes
The ego disappears
Self pride vanishes
I am just a drop of water
In the oceans of seven continents]

The poem above, “Alam” (The world) (*Iltizam*, 2015, p. 32) is a complete surrender of the poet’s feelings to God, the Creator of the world. The poet reminds the society that however high we reach, we have to surrender to the power of the Creator. Mankind has been created to worship and be of service to Him. The time of death of all creatures has been determined by Allah and its only to Him that we return. The poet considers himself just a speck of dust when compared to God’s greatness.

This poem, when examined comprehensively is able to interpret the Bajau’s society’s true beliefs represented by the poet. The Sea Bajau society is already in the modern stage compared to what it was previously. They have now begun to know about God and follows the religion that is brought in. They do not only depend on the natural world but are already teaching themselves to learn from their trials and accept life with gratitude and patience. This poem is able to represent the Bajau society’s identity that have started to interpret the world and its Creator.

The writer does not forget to put forward the issue of humanity in Gaza Palestine. The agonies and suffering of fellow Muslims in Gaza are interpreted into verses by Zubir (2015). The Bajaus express their sympathy

and sadness looking at young children being killed, the holy land flooded with blood and tears. Their tears are for the cause of justice and fairness in their own motherland. Their beloved Palestine has a unique history and should be remembered by Muslims all over the world. The poet fights for this in the poems that he writes.

CONCLUSION

The *dakwah* and utilitarian approaches which have been employed in this study find that through 59 poems selected from the anthology of poetry, *Iltizam* by Zubir (2015) it is clear that the elements of *dakwah* form the main basis in bringing about change to the society today. At the same time, finally these poems portray the real Bajau society. The poet writes beautiful verses to depict the journey of life of his people as well as endeavouring to become a poet that truly follows the principles of Islam, that is to spread the message of doing good and avoiding the bad. The *dakwah* elements such as invocation, divinity, and Islam are the the main themes in line with local wisdom portrayals that highlight the identity, philosophy, way of life and culture of the writer and the Bajau community. Zubir (2015) endeavours to place himself as a poet who upholds the truth of Islam. The poems that he wrote become a vehicle for *dakwah* to the public. Zubir's poems clearly leave a strong impact in bringing about awareness to his people so as not to be swayed by the country's development as it can destroy the society's identity and image. The objective of encouraging good and avoiding the bad should become the basis of works with an Islamic bent. Therefore these values should be defended as the symbol of advancement in life of the Bajau community.

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