

‘AINULMARDIYYAH: A HEAVENLY REWARD PROMISED BY ACEHNESE JIHAD TEXTS

(‘*Ainulmardiyah: Ganjaran Syurgawi yang Dijanjikan oleh Teks Jihad Aceh*)

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Abstract

The sanctity of Acehese conceptualisation of jihad for the promise of heaven becomes apparent via a heavenly houri called ‘Ainulmardiyah. She is the maiden waiting for her “husbands” in the heaven who fall in the battlefield. This paper discusses the portrayal of ‘Ainulmardiyah (maidens in heaven for a Muslim martyr) in the most celebrated Acehese text on Islamic holy war, *Hikayat Prang Sabi (HPS)*. The *hikayat* text is first approached philologically to verify the adaptations that likely have been made. Methods of commentary are employed by comparing the portrayal of the houri in the *hikayat* and other texts with holy war themes. The texts are then approached semantically to

analyse any underlying concepts and standard vocabularies used in text on the female charm. Hence, this guides this paper to formulate a pattern of how portrayal of the houri is used to spur the mujahidin to fight for the dignity of their religion and state. It is found that the endorsement of 'Ainulmardiyyah in the *Hikayat Prang Sabi* text is subject to Islamic teaching that is transmitted not only through the *Qur'an* and the *sunnah*, but also numerous Islamic eschatological texts heralding the holiness of martyrdom in jihad. The promise of the tantalising reward of heaven is also intensified by sociopolitical factors throughout Aceh's history.

Keywords: 'Ainulmardiyyah, heavenly reward, Acehnese texts, jihad, Prang Sabi, holy war

Abstrak

Konsep kesucian jihad Aceh dihidupkan melalui gambaran bidadari syurga yang dipanggil 'Ainulmardiyyah, iaitu bidadari yang menunggu "suami" yang gugur di medan perang. Kajian ini membincangkan penceritaan 'Ainulmardiyyah (bidadari di syurga untuk seorang Muslim yang syahid) dalam teks bahasa Aceh yang paling terkenal tentang perang suci Islam, iaitu Hikayat Prang Sabi (HPS). Teks hikayat ini awalnya didekati secara filologi untuk meneliti kemungkinan penyesuaian pada teks yang mungkin telah dibuat. Kaedah ulasan digunakan dengan membandingkan gambaran bidadari dalam hikayat ini dengan teks lain yang turut membawa tema perang suci. Teks-teks tersebut kemudiannya didekati secara semantik untuk mengkaji sebarang konsep asas dan perbendaharaan kata yang seragam mengenai daya tarikan wanita, yang menjadi panduan kepada kajian ini untuk merumuskan corak bagaimana gambaran bidadari yang digunakan untuk menyemarakkan semangat para mujahid dalam memperjuangkan maruah agama dan negara mereka. Kajian ini mendapati bahawa gambaran 'Ainulmardiyyah dalam teks Hikayat Prang Sabi adalah tertakluk pada ajaran Islam yang disampaikan bukan sahaja melalui al-Quran dan sunnah tetapi juga dalam kebanyakan teks eskatologi Islam yangewartakan kekudusan syahid dalam jihad. Janji ganjaran syurga yang menggembirakan juga diperhebat oleh faktor sosiopolitik sepanjang sejarah Aceh.

Kata kunci: 'Ainulmardiyyah, ganjaran syurgawi, teks Aceh, jihad, Prang Sabi, perang suci

INTRODUCTION

Involvement in a jihad constitutes an answer to a divine call that promises tantalising perks in the afterlife. An Acehnese literary text on war, *Hikayat Prang Sabi* (hereafter *HPS*); the story of the Holy War, succeeded in creating visual imaginable images of heavenly splendour prepared for the martyrs. *HPS* is a saga widely recognised in Aceh as a reliable text when it comes to the concept of Acehnese warfare against the infidels (Noriah, 2010:139). An appealing character in the *hikayat* is ‘Ainulmardiyyah, a future wife awaiting her would-be husband who falls in the battlefield. The story of ‘Ainulmardiyyah was once told during the hijra of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) to the city of Medina. She is portrayed as a *hourai* with incomparable beauty and is considered as reward for someone who falls as a martyr in the path of Allah (Muhammad Sahlan et al., 2021:211). The story about her is the most recalled episode from the *hikayat*.

Most of the time when jihad is discussed, it elicits sensitive and emotional response from participants. It is often translated hastily as “holy war” that clearly suggests its frequent association with armed confrontation. Essentially, the phrase “holy war” is not a fitting translation of jihad. The concept of “holy war” historically dated back to the Middle Ages of European religious expansion and was used to characterise the saga of the Crusades, which was seen as defending the faith “in the way of God” (Schimmel, 1995:259–260). Thus, it is remarkable to note that the Malay phrase “*perang suci*” is a literal, direct translation of the Biblical concept of “*heiliger Krieg*” (holy war)—coined by Friedrich Schwally in 1901 (Firestone, 1999:3), and it is frequently attempted to fully hold the meaning of jihad. For the Crusaders the holy war was justified not only when combating Muslims, but also when fighting the Balt, shamanic Mongols, and those accused of heresy. However, emphasis was given to fighting against the Muslims, and this was not only legitimised by the Pope—who was regarded as the representative of Christ—but also united Christians throughout Europe (Riley-Smith, 2004:51).

Most Acehnese believe that *HPS* was composed by Teungku Chik Muhammad di Panté Kulu as a response to the request of his comrade, Teungku Chik di Tiro. Besides this particular *hikayat*, numerous literary texts on holy war with different socio-political contexts are also found in Aceh¹. Generally, in the Malay world, one can find literary works of different genres dwelling on locals’ struggles against unwanted external forces, such as *Syair Perang Mengkasar*, *Syair Perang Siak*,

Syair Perang Johor, and *Syair Perang Menteng* to name a few. It is interesting to find literary works that adapt ideas of jihad accounts in the far past and are appropriated to fit in with the given contexts in the milieu of the authors. Such a phenomenon of adaptation is clearly mirrored in the way Teungku Chik Pante Kulu discloses the sources by which he based his work and refrained from bringing up his original idea.

The visualisation of the figure of heavenly houris in relation with martyrdom has been holding enormous interest for researchers from diverse disciplines. Rustomji (2010:172) mentions specialities of some groups of people that duly belong to certain levels of the paradise, such as prophets, God messengers, martyrs, those who prayed, the charitable, hajj pilgrims, and those who struggled in the path of God. He touches upon both the martyrs and those who struggle in the path of God yet provides no detailed explanation about the difference between the two. According to a popular Islamic jurisprudential opinion, the term “*syahid*” (martyr, Acehnese: *cahid*) basically, despite its common use to refer to the dead ones in the war, also applies to the dead of other causes like from pandemic, drowning, and pain in stomach – they too deserve being referred to as martyrs. The houris, he said, are a general reward presented not merely for the fallen in battlefield but also for those living a pious life.

Mohammed Hafez (2007) discusses the themes of heroic martyrdom mythology circulated by the Iraqi suicide bombers, one of which made them crave death. For suicide bombers, marriage to the houri is a heavenly perk they have been yearning to obtain in the afterlife. To emphasise the truth of the eschatological delight, they usually post photos of the dead bombers appearing to be sleeping in peace; a caption is then added saying that the martyr “is happy in the company of heavenly houris”. Nevertheless, Mohammed Hafez refrains from saying that this particular sensual reward and some other myths are the true motivations of the bombers’ jihad.

Using the theory of rational choice, Perry and Hasisi (2015) analyses the motivation of mujahidin suicide attack. They noted that marrying 72 heavenly houris is one of religious rewards promised upon martyrdom. This belief explains why the Hamas, a Palestinian nationalist organisation, celebrates the death of the mujahidin in “wedding” format, that is, by publicising the announcement to gather in the deceased’s family house as if they invite guests to attend a wedding party. Such a sensual promise works exceptionally in a Muslim community where casual relationships with opposite gender is strictly forbidden. This promise strongly captivates

mujahidin's attention since martyrdom is a gateway to experience joys which have been religiously discouraged during mundane life.

All these studies sufficiently confirm that the houris are indeed the heavenly rewards awaiting their rightful receivers, as perceived in the previously mentioned Muslim communities. These studies imply the success of houris' attractiveness when told to the communities, which in due course develops their enthusiasm towards the wars they deem holy. Nonetheless, in the Aceh context, imagination about houris for holy war martyrs never gets due attention and in-depth discussions. Most academic discourses revolve around their steady waiting for martyred men (Syarwan, 2018; Asriani, 2018), and their unusual, physical looks (Imran, 2000; Edriana, 2005). An unfilled gap could be the question of how 'Ainulmardiyyah was and is sustained in jihad-related discourses throughout Aceh's history even if there is no physical war to be carried out.

The unwelcome Dutch occupation in Aceh from the late 19th century until mid-20th century had witnessed the forceful role of jihad texts in enticing the native Acehnese inhabitants to seize a chance for a heavenly life. Literature, or specifically literary texts, served as the media to transmit incitement of jihad to the people. The scene of 'Ainulmardiyyah in those texts is the most hyped up part when it comes to the finest reward a martyr could gain in paradise. This paper seeks to give a broader space for discussing the figure of 'Ainulmardiyyah, the queen of heavenly houris, imaginable among Acehnese mujahidin owing to the details of them presented by the most renowned Acehnese literary work, *Hikayat Prang Sabi*.

RESEARCH METHODS

This paper specifically investigates the female figure of 'Ainulmardiyyah within the selected verses of *Hikayat Prang Sabi Teungku Putroe (HPSTP)* text (Cod. Or. 8689 UBL) whose manuscript is now kept in the library of the Leiden University. The facsimile of its original Jawi text is reproduced by Ibrahim (1992) in his book. He romanised the Acehnese-Jawi text and provided its Indonesian translation. The portrayal of houris will be mainly deduced from this text. Some other texts circulated in Aceh—mostly those of religious nature—that appertained to the houris are considered as well.

To profoundly observe *HPS* verses on 'Ainulmardiyyah, the text will be approached philologically. To analyse this literary text, it is imperative to know that the author was not only an 'alim (man of knowledge) but also a poet who received extensive teaching in religious and literary subjects

in his upbringing prior to doing his writing project. Only after plunging into his then social-political conditions during which he composed the text can one proceed to expound his concept of justified holy war. Notwithstanding, this paper does not attempt to gather manuscripts of *HPS* to scrutinise the text word by word. Rather, since the text has already had its Romanised transcription in Ibrahim's, this paper focuses on the episode of the 'Ainulmardiyah, by tracing the text from which the story is adapted, the context in which it was composed, and the way the adapted text was developed in the *HPS*.

The transcribed text is converted into Plain Text before being imported into AntConc searching tool to get the concordance of each word. This step allows scrutinisation of selected keywords, which is then approached semantically to understand their stable meanings across generations of Acehnese reception. The selected texts are read closely for making commentary. Our methods of commentary entailed on analysis on the text referred to by the *HPSTP*'s author, including Qur'anic verses, prophetic traditions, and commentaries of both. Additionally, the verse-lines' number of excerpts from *HPSTP* quoted in this paper follows the numbering given by Ibrahim (1992).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Jihad in Current Discourses

Jihad is usually associated with two perspectives, either as violent or non-violent acts. The former pertains to Qur'anic justification to fight a war to gain peace. Meanwhile, the latter is defined as unarmed acts attempted to realise peaceful relation with non-Islamic authorities (Rahman, 2016). The original Arabic term, jihad, has frequently been associated with extremist acts conducted in the name of Islam, especially after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Ever since then, such an association has been persisting although some national deradicalisation programmes have been introduced to separate Islam from terrorism (Ali & Hiariej, 2021:85–86). Jihad has been politicised and frequently linked to the Islamic political movement (cf. Schroter, 2019:14–16). Once, jihad was used by the Arabs every time they conquered lands which were ruled previously by non-Muslim empires. At the same time, it is monopolised by certain Muslim groups who do not only target infidel enemies; rather, the target could also be their Muslim brothers if they oppose the ruler who claims to side with God (Schumann, 2008:264).

Such a distorted image of jihad has been exacerbated by simplified media framings reporting how Islamic teachings inspire some “bad apples” to conduct suicide bombings, challenge national state ideologies, and force non-Muslims to embrace Islam. This has been massively influencing media discourse and diffusing a mistaken understanding that deems the nature of jihad as a genuine call to struggle in the path of God. Another rarely noticed dimension of jihad is its attempt to establish political consolidation to protect Islam from enemies that could be a threat to the Muslim existence.

Jihad is essentially a call to secure someone’s properties and lives for the cause of Allah. It is the only legal warfare in Islam, conducted under the control of Islamic law, and ought to be called for by a duly constituted state authority (Esposito, 2003:159–160). Anyone killed in the path of jihad worth rewarding (*The Qur’an*, 2008, 3:157–158, 169–172), while the ignorant ones and insincere participants are doomed to receive punishment in the afterlife (*The Qur’an*, 2008, 9:81–82, 48:16). The discussion about houris which is inseparable from the call has been made laughable by those identifying themselves as anti-terrorists. This attitude is mainly developed due to indistinct understanding about the jihad’s essence. Islamic monotheism (*tauhid*) requires Muslims to have faith in the immaterial, including events taking place in the hereafter. Nevertheless, the coverage of the believed immateriality is different from one Muslim community to another. Making fun of a firm faith, for example, by disseminating provocative writings, pictures, or speech could be perceived as a disrespectful rejection.²

Sources of Jihad Idea in *HPS*

The composition of *HPS* was preconditioned by the Dutch-Aceh war. This is however not indicative of the absence of jihad teaching prior to the Dutch presence. Perhaps, no anti-European jihad texts should have been composed if the sovereignties of the Aceh and other Sumatran sultanates had not been disrupted by the terms agreed in the Treaty of London in 1824. In the sense of international armed struggle, jihad is justified as defensive war fought when aggressions and persecution on a Muslim nation occur (Al-Dawoody, 2009). Once a war is fought against the transgression towards Islam, scriptural basis and eschatological narrative will never be omitted.

Jihad was and is a universal act of struggle, conducted for the cause of Allah. Though the person or a group of persons targeted as enemies are different, the justifications referred to oftentimes root from the same

sources. The intertextual link between *HPS* with other previous texts of the same type enables the *hikayat* to get itself imbued with various uniqueness for enjoyment of sheer readership. *HPS* texts are differentiated into two categories judging from their performativity: *tanbéh* and *epos* (Imran, 2000). *Tanbéh* (warning) collects texts that overtly approve and endorse involvement in jihad; exhortative texts of Teungku Chik di Tiro, Teungku Chik Kutakarang, and Teungku Nyak Aḥmad Cot Paleuë belong to this category. Meanwhile, *epos* (literally, epic) are texts that narrate stories of brave warriors who fought wars in Aceh in pursuit of the martyrdom. Even so, one point worth noting is that *HPS* does not contain brutal and violent war descriptions, but inspirational stories and moral values that can develop the character of the readers and listeners to obey the Prophet's commands in order to be strong and steadfast during the battle (Mukhlis & Herman, 2021).

HPS has become a source of jihad justification during several armed confrontations occurring in Aceh. *HPS* has had a timespan of at least three "holy wars", namely the battle of Acehnese people against Dutch colonisers, and rebellions of DI (Darul Islam) and GAM (Aceh Freedom Movement) against Indonesian government. The reason was to fight the infidels (*kaphé*) and the oppression (Syukri, 2020). Such adaptations conjure the elements presented by the referred source yet veers from the very essence intended by its first author (Michael, 1979). It had to fit in with the given social dynamics of its society and be composed in the language they speak.

Acehnese language was preferred for the composition, not only because it could escape the attention of enemies (Kartomi, 2010:204), but also it was the language through which the people could best understand the call to fight for the jihad. The verses of *HPS* could psychologically influence the mental condition of Acehnese people who felt desperately frustrated to live their lives under the Dutch authority. The *hikayat* guides them on how to make noble contributions through martyrdom in the battle; this is not counted as suicide which is condemned by God (Muyassir, 2021).

A number of *hikayat* have been composed in Acehnese language after *HPS*, yet by far, none has ever gone beyond its popularity. For the Dutch, the carriers of *HPS* manuscripts had to suffer hard punishment because the text was responsible for the Acehnese firm belief to gain an honourable death. As the Dutch banned the dissemination of the *HPS* manuscripts, many Acehnese people had to memorise and rewrite it. This contributed to the emergence of several different versions of the *hikayat* which can still be found today (Syukri, 2019).

HPS consists of four main inspirational stories intended to spur people to the holy battlefield (Mukhlis & Herman, 2021). The first story, and again the most emblematic part of the *hikayat*, is the story of ‘Abdulwahid, a religious scholar who preached the enormous rewards of martyrdom to his pupils. It was narrated that, during his sermon, he recited a Qur’anic verse to his pupils and kindled their enthusiasm. One young man immediately prepared for the holy war, acquiring arms for himself and his fellow fighters. On his way to the battlefield, during a time of rest, he fell asleep. This young warrior thus saw a vision of paradise, filled with luxuries and lovely houris, and he was introduced to the most beautiful one named ‘Ainulmardiyyah. At this time, he was suddenly awoken and he cried. ‘Abdulwahid asked him the reason for his crying, and the young man detailed the paradise he had seen in his sleep. To make his dream a reality, he rushed to the battlefield and fought with zeal. After his death on the battlefield, the houris arrived to escort him to ‘Ainulmardiyyah.

The second story tells of a pious king, one of the Bani Isra’il (Children of Israel), who prayed that God would bless him with sons whom he would prepare to fight in a holy war. He was bestowed with 1000 sons, whom he assigned, one after another, as the commanders of his troops. All died on the battlefield. Finally, the king himself went to war, where he too was killed. All was in accordance with his plan.

The third story tells of an impotent man who desired a child. He and his wife prayed fervently. When his wife was pregnant and expected to give birth, the husband answered the call of the Prophet to a holy war. After the war was won, the man returned and found his wife had died. He saw a light emerges from her tomb, and when he approached it, he found his child was still alive. This miracle was his reward for answering the call to the holy war.

The fourth story narrates the life of Sa‘id Salmi, an unattractive, black man who was rejected by all the women he had proposed. The Prophet instructed Sa‘id to speak with ‘Umar, one of the Prophet’s companions, and propose to his daughter. When ‘Umar rejected Sa‘id because of his appearance, his daughter warned him about the consequences of not heeding the Prophet’s decision; ‘Umar thus accepted the proposal. The Prophet then instructed Sa‘id to speak with several of his other companions (Abu Bakr, ‘Usman, and ‘Ali) to seek donations of 1,000 dirham each, which would be used to acquire necessary equipment. Suddenly, the Muslims were attacked by infidels, and the call to holy war was announced. Sa‘id swiftly decided to participate in it risking to lose the marriage. He fought alongside his

peers and was killed. The heavenly houris then descended to escort him to paradise.

Complementing these four stories, the author of *HPSTP* included several short stories. He wrote about Abraha and his elephant army, who were attacked by “flocks of birds” (*tayran ababil*) as they approached the Ka’ba to destroy it (*The Qur’an*, 2008, 105:1–5). The author also relayed a miraculous phenomenon that occurred during a war in Idi (now part of East Aceh District), wherein the faces of Aceh’s enemies were mysteriously torn by blades, even though none of the local fighters carried a knife or sword. Also mentioned is the story of Qarun, who was devoured by the earth after he refused to donate some of his wealth. In several parts of the text, Qur’anic verses and prophetic Hadiths are quoted to extol the grandeur of participation in holy war. *HPSTP* is closed with a prayer asking God to restore the dignity of the Sultanate of Aceh.

Regarding the original source of *HPS*, one can locate the mention of it by the author of *HPSTP* (Cod. Or. 8689, UBL) in the *hikayat*’s preface. Like most Malay authors, who prefer to imply inability, the author of *HPSTP* discloses the jihad text he adapts (ll. 30-34):

*Keu peu’ingat jaga-jaga, kadang lupa dumna akhi
Wahé teungku beugèt tapham, kon lôn reusam hana meukri
Haba nyoe lôn tueng syit di dalam Musir al-garam kitab prang sabi
Di dalam Qur’angeuriwayat, firman Hadarat Tuhanku Rabbi
Seureuta hadih Sayyidul Ummat, bè’lupa that wahé akhi*

[As a reminder, just in case my brothers may forget
O *teungku*, please understand, I am not making this up
I adapted this from *Musir al-garam*, the book of holy war
This is also mentioned in the *Qur’an*, the word of God
As well as in prophetic tradition, don’t forget it o my brothers]

When online database was made available like present days—researchers then were more burdened with limited library access, ascertaining the existence of the book with the above-mentioned title could be relatively demanding. To the authors’ knowledge, only in *HPS* did the title appear for the first time for the Acehnese. Immediately inferred is that the Acehnese people were not familiar to it. Yet they never questioned its existence, its author, and its intended messages whatsoever. In this respect, Ibrahim (1992:111) found another text with *prang sabi* theme (Cod. Or. 8136b) in the Leiden library. The text’s author mentioned *Mukhtasar musir*

al-garam as his reference. In Muslim scholarship tradition, a *mukhtasar* is an abridgement of written works for quick reading, attempted either by first authors or by someone else. When translating the source's title, Ibrahim seems to translate it together with the preceding word *kitab*, making its Indonesian translation somewhat misleading: *Kitab ringkas yang menggerakkan cinta yang menyiksa hati* (A concise book that entices amorous love). Moreover, in the closing page, the *hikayat*'s author revealed a name whose works he based on, that is, Syaikh Aḥmad ibn Musa. This surmised that the *syaiikh* was the author of the text (Cod. Or. 8136b).

The author of *HPSTP* mentioned the source he referred to as *Musir al-garam*, without the word *mukhtasar* (summary). For comparison, the authors of this study managed to find a *HPS* manuscript (MS.PM. 0237/2016) in Pedir Museum Banda Aceh. Just like in *HPSTP*, its author—or perhaps the scribe—did not write *mukhtasar* to precede the title. The fact that the source's title spelled in the two manuscripts reads slightly different has perplexed the authors' judgement of how it is actually spelled in Arabic.

Authors decided to proceed with Ibrahim's transcription for the title, *Musir al-garam*, which the authors believed that if transliterated from Arabic should read as *m-s-y-r a-l-g-r-a-m*. The authors then passed the title as a query into the search bar of a virtual electronic library website that comprises of a large database of Arabic literature: noor-book.com. The results generated four titles containing the entered query:

- (1) *Musir al-Garam ila Taibah wa al-Balad al-Haram* by Muhammad ibn Isma' il Al-San'ani (1993),
- (2) *Musir al-Garam al-Sakin ila Asyraf al-Amakin* by Abu al-Faraj 'Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Jawzi (1995),
- (3) *Musir al-Garam ila Ziyarah al-Quds wa al-Syam* by Ibn Tamim Al-Maqdisi (1994),
- (4) *Masyari' al-Asywaq ila Masari' al-'Usysyaq wa Musir al-Garam ila Dar al-Salam, fi al-aJihad wa-Fada'ilih* by Ibn al-Nahhas (2002).

Only after authors skimmed the contents of these works, it was concluded that the first, second, and third ones are not a substantial source for a jihad text. They discuss reasons why one should visit some religiously revered places like Makkah, Medina, Jerussalem, and Syria. Only the fourth one resonates with the *Musir al-Garam* mentioned in *HPSTP*; hence the inference that *Musir al-Garam* is actually a title shortened from the

Masyari 'al-Asywaq ila Masari' al-'Usysyaq wa Musir al-Garam ila Dar al-Salam, fi al-Jihad wa-Fada'ilih, a work by Ibn al-Nahhas (2002). More convincing is the fact that Ibn al-Nahhas, indeed, was later attempted as an abridgment of the work to serve as a *mukhtasar*.

This inference is not baseless. Some studies confirm Ibn al-Nahhas' influence in endorsing the jihad thrust across the Islamic world. The incident that spurred him to write was when he witnessed the relentless Mongolian annexation on the Levant by the end of 15th century, forcing him to leave for Egypt and remained there until his death. It is most likely that his work was the product of this harsh period. In due course this text was reachable to the *HPS* author who later adopted its jihad teaching for his own society. The authors believe that, at that time, only those who ever experienced life around Middle Eastern Islamic study centres could access the text. Nonetheless, *Musir al-garam* is not the only reference for Acehnese *hikayat* that treatises on holy war. 'Abd al-Samad of Palembang, besides being known for his profound elaborative work on Gazali's mysticism, *Siyar al-Salikin*, was known for the influence of his *Nasihah al-Muslimin wa Tazkirah al-Mu'minin* on Acehnese jihad texts (Snouck Hurgronje, 1906; Al-Falimbani, 2020). A text of unknown author in the Aceh Museum entitled *Hazihi Qissah Nafsiyyah* (No. 07_1201) seems to be an Acehenese adaptation from the *Nasihah*, judging from the sequence of the quoted sacred texts in both texts.

'Ainulmardiyyah among houris

References to the houris and 'Ainulmardiyyah are articulated with several terms in the *HPSTP*. The phrase 'Ainulmardiyyah is attested to 17 times, either within the story of 'Abdulwahid or outside it. To address the houris in general, the term *budiadari* is mentioned 16 times. The term *putroe* is used 14 times; at some moments, it refers to 'Ainulmardiyyah specifically, and at other times to the rest of houris.

'Ainulmardiyyah is spelled *عين المرضية* ('-y-n-a-l-m-r-d-y-t). Basically, this spelling is somewhat problematic. Should it agreed about the Islamic-Arabic derivation, it has to conform to the way it is spelled in sacred text. Some prophetic hadith that touch upon this case mentioned *عيناء* (*ayna/-y-n-a-*); the authors would rather stand with this spelling since it is spelled the same way in Ibn al-Nahhas' (2002)—the source of which *HPS* is adapted from. However, *عين* ('*ayn*) itself is the plural form of *عيناء* (*ayna*) (Al-Razi, 1990:217). So far, the authors have not found

'*ayn* being mentioned as being followed by *m-r-d-y-t* (*mardiyah*) in any hadith. Therefore, authors decided to enter the "*ayna*" into the search bar of an online search engine for hadith, dorar.net. The search generated 33 hits. Some are directly followed by *m-r-d-y-t* (*mardiyah*), while others are preceded by *h-w-r-a-* (*haura*).

Regarding *haura*', *The Qur'an* mentions the word *hur* (*h-w-r*) four times (specifically in the context of heavenly houris). *Hur* is the plural of *haura*', meaning "whiteness" (Al-Razi, 1990:217). The English "houris" is indeed derived from this Arabic root. Ma'luf (2003:161) mentions *hur* which means "lack" and *hawr* which means "destroy". The *hur* and other words of the same root are listed in the following table. Considering the scope of this study, this paper only discusses the *hur*.

Table 1 Qur'anic words rooted from h-w-r.

Word	Surah	Verse number
<i>hur</i>	al-Rahman	72
	al-Dukhan	54
	al-Tur	20
	al-Waqi'ah	22
<i>hawariyyun</i>	al-'Imran	52
	al-Ma'idah	112
<i>hawariyyin</i>	al-Saff	14
<i>yuhawiru</i>	al-Kahf	34
	al-Kahf	38
<i>tahawur</i>	al-Mujadalah	1
<i>yahur</i>	al-Inshiqaq	14

The portrayal of the houris in Acehese society usually pertains to the way they are created with lust-arousing physical appearances. Religious texts, especially those discussing the creation of universe, highly contribute to the way the society perceive the houris. A great Acehese '*alim* who served as the mufti for Sultan Iskandar Sani, Nuruddin al-Raniri, is renowned for his initiation to compose the first book on *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) in Malay language. He concisely touched upon the houris in his work, *Bad'u Khalq al-Samawat wa al-Ard*, The Beginning of The Creation of The Heavens and The Earth (Al-Raniri, 1929:22):

“... as mentioned in the ḥadīth that Allah created all houris from light. And their faces’ colours consist of four [colours], two of which, white and green. Their bodies are from saffron, ambre, and champor. Their hair smells very fragrant like star anise. Their body parts between toes and knees are from saffron. And those between knees and hands are from musk. And those between hands and shoulders are from amber. And those between shoulders and heads are from camphor. If they spit onto the world, musk fragrance will prevail over. On their breasts are written their husbands’ names and one of Allah’s names ...”

Though this work is not included in the curriculum of *zawiyah* (or *dayah*, Acehnese traditional Islamic schools), a similar account of houris can be found in other popular works on cosmology. For example, *Daqa’iq al-Akhbar*, written in Malay, hence having a wider readership compared to most religious books in Arabic which should be carefully studied, mostly exclusively, under supervision of *teungku* (teacher in Acehnese traditional schools).

Some *mufassir* (the Qur’an commentators) conclude that houris ought to be perceived neutrally in gender and are not supposed to be reductively projected as female entity solely prepared to satisfy men’s sexual desire. Commenting on *hurun* ‘in in Surah al-Dukhan:54, Quraish Shibab (in Isamudin, 2018) contends that another acceptable meaning of the term is a genderless being. Unlike most commentators, he refrains from determining the houris’ gender as female. Another denouncer of patriarchy-based Qur’an interpretations is Amina Wadud. She adamantly argues that the word *zawj* and its plural form *azwaj* in *The Qur’an* during Medina period (*The Qur’an*, 2008, 2:25, 3:15) have to be perceived as spouses for believers and do not suggest numerosness (Atik, 2013:464–465). She proposes deconstruction of the already embedded patriarchy ideas in Qur’anic gender interpretations that she found biased due to dominance of male *mufassir*.

Heavenly Reward for Martyrs

HPSTP contains four main stories. The episode of ‘Ainulmardiyyah is narrated in the story of ‘Abdulwahid. In some other sources, this story is named the story of ‘Ainulmardiyyah. Irrespective of this naming preference, both titles contain the same story. Before the Aceh-Dutch war, this story spread in Aceh through an Acehnese translation of *Tanbih al-Gafilin*, a didactic text by Abu Lais of Samarkand (d. 983 AD). The story was narrated that a young man heard a Qur’anic verse which kindled his

ardour for fighting the enemy, that he then took some rest on his way to the battlefield and fell asleep. Then he saw a vision of paradise filled with luxuries and lovely houris, and he was introduced to the most beautiful houri called ‘Ainulmardiyyah who only allows herself to be touched by a martyr man are all quite similar to the one that was narrated in *HPSTP*.

‘Ainulmardiyyah is the queen of all houris in the paradise. One ought to pass through walking along banks of four rivers before entering ‘Ainulmardiyyah’s chamber. The four rivers mentioned in *HPS* are *Krueng kalkausar* (Kalkausar River), *Krueng ie abiën* (Milk River), *Krueng ie unoë* (Honey River), and *Krueng ië mameh* (Sweet Water River); these are mentioned respectively, one after another, stratifying the beauty levels a martyr would pass through. In each of the rivers are the bathing houris that greet the martyred man. All of them say that they are merely the servants of the ‘Ainulmardiyyah and that the man should continue walking until he arrives at ‘Ainulmardiyyah’s dwelling.

Regardless, the accompaniment of houris is not merely experienced by the martyrs. Other houris, excluding ‘Ainulmardiyyah, are said to be created for the believers in general who could secure place in the paradise. Meanwhile, ‘Ainulmardiyyah is believed to be somewhat exclusive for martyrs. Her fineness is measured by her unusual look. For example, *HPS* said her feet are wrapped with raw gold and her tibia is transparent, like a clear glass showing the colour of its content (Al-Jauzi, 2002:170). To win her companionship the men need to ignore the beautiful wives to whom they are married in the worldly life.

Profanity within Sanctity

The degree of profanity might sound quite relative, depending on the angles through which it is viewed. Profanity is defined as the use of obscene language that is usually unacceptable in regular social settings (Feldman et al., 2017:816). Although profanity is sometimes deemed synonymous to expletives and blasphemy (Stone et al., 2015:66), it could function as a pain and stress reliever (Robbins et al., 2011:2) and as means to express unfiltered feelings (such as anger and frustration) and honesty (Feldman et al., 2017:817). Some find the portrayal of houris in the Acehese jihad texts fairly profane (Shahab et al., 2005). Something can be profane mainly if it is judged from religious perspective. Sensual details of houris, and of ‘Ainulmardiyyah particularly in *HPS*, could be regarded as something inappropriate if juxtaposed with the pious intention to carry on a holy war.

Profanity in the account of ‘Ainulmardiyyah lives with the flexible nature of *HPS* authorship – just like the case of other Acehnese *hikayat*. Since *HPS* is essentially narrating an Islam-based story of heavenly beauty, the profanity is still expressed in the context of a pious language. The following verse is the first assertion that overtly endorses quest for the houris. It compares beautiful wives in the mundane life with ‘Ainulmardiyyah’s lovelier physical features (*HPS*, ll. 145–149):

*Tujôh plôh droe nyang khideumat, rupa jroh that hana sakri
Tangiëng mantong kaséb lazat, hanpeuë tamat deungon jari
Nyandum bulueng neubri lé Allah, hé meutuah jak prang sabi
Be’ lé ta duek nanggroë sôсах, wo baK Allah nyang that suci
Bahlé tinggai inong ceudah, bah teukeubah nyang bee basi*

[Seventy of them who serve, their beauty is incomparable
Even looking at them is pleasant enough, let alone touching them
That is the portion Allah gives, o the blessed go to holy war
Don’t remain seated in [this] desperate land, go return to Allah,
the Holiest
Give up the pretty girl, leave the foul-smelling one]

It is inferred that the superior beauty gained in paradise is meant to tantalise the already motivated fighters. This way, the worldly beauty is made utterly futile compared to that of paradise. *The Qur’an* (2008, 55:72) tells a scene of the houris in the paradise, that they are reserved in pavilions, waiting for their husbands. Al-Sawi (2006:205–206) comments on this verse by narrating the verbal argumentation between the houris and the mundane women taking place in paradise. The worldly women claim superiority owing to their good deeds during the worldly life like praying, fasting, and taking ablution, which are never performed by the houris. Al-Sawi concludes that the worldly women who enter the paradise are 70,000 times superior to the houris.

The heavenly perks in *HPS* are manifested through imaginable exaggeration of the worldly items (Siegel, 1969:258). Thus, the heaven is portrayed as the better form of the world without provoking absolute rejection of it. Portrayal of ‘Ainulmardiyyah and the houris are, therefore, attempted to work well with the males’ imagination about females’ attractiveness. At the very least, the exaggerated picturisation suffices the expectation for the mundane mind though Islamic belief asserts that

paradise is something that “no eye has ever seen, nor an ear has ever heard of nor a human heart can ever think of” (Al-Bukhari, 1997:356).

The following verses (*HPS*, ll. 525–534) stresses the precondition to meet before one is allowed to accompany the houris:

*Meunan jikheuën putéh lumat, suara mangat tiwah bangsi
Keulua roh ngon seumangat, manyoh lazat lôn beureuhi
Badan lôn nyoë miseuë geumpa, han ék saba hé ya sayidi
Lon tajo lé lôn keumeung wa, po jroh rupa lom jikheuën kri
He teungku cut bungong keumbee, piyôh dilee payông nanggri*

*Cit si'at trôih bak watee, riwang dilee bak prang sabi
Hé teungku cut meuih seuneupoh, malam nyoe troih ban nyang janji
Cit si'at treut lôn meutangôh, nyawong lam tubôh gohlom suci
Areuta nyangka Tuhan teurimong, jak jôk nyawong sikarang ini
Syarat tuanku niët beuseunang, neupumanyang agama Rabbi*

[The white-skinned princess said so, her voice was as pleasant as that of bamboo fluet

Soul and spirit flew out, I was so eager

I felt my body shake, I couldn't wait o sayidi

I rushed to embrace her, she said the following

O teungku cut, the blossoming flower, hold yourself back, o the country's umbrella

Wait for the time, you should now return to the holy war

O teungku cut, the gilding gold, tonight the promise will be fulfilled

I still have to wait a little while, the soul inside your body is not yet purified

Other donated belongings have been accepted, now sell yourself

You have to be pleased, with intention to uphold God's religion.]

For this reason, at some moments the use of profane expressions clarifies better the intended meaning than careful decorum does. Simply put, something can be profane and religious at the same time. A similar profane expression is, for example, found in the Song of Solomon as it narrates about a man and a woman who explicitly express deep admiration of each other's bodies. Although this way of expression might sound sensual to some degree, it is not deemed as something pornographic (Natar, 2015).

Given the *HPS* popularity in Aceh, 'Ainulmardiyah seems to be the most expected end should death become a consequence of a jihad. The

latest physical confrontation of Aceh was the bloody conflict involving the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and Indonesian military (from 1976 to 2005). As expected, the movement popularised the *HPS* again when they coaxed the Acehnese people to partake in their (version of) holy war. An abridged version of *HPS* which was popular after Reformasi 1998 did not miss mentioning the houris³; since then, it became widely recognised as *Prang Sabi* song.

The song is quite popular today due to music covers made by some Acehnese singers—e.g., Cut Niken, Saleuem band, and Orang Hutan Squad band to name a few. Moreover, the GAM still holds annual gathering on December 4th commemorating the anniversary of the establishment of the movement in 1976. The shortened *HPS* is chanted to pay homage to the deads. Since the Helsinki MoU already marked the end of the conflict, the song in turn becomes a peace song without losing its relevance as a war song (Cut Maya Aprita Sari et al., 2022:20).

Hardly can we say that the listeners of this song are expecting to struggle against any infidels or enemies. Rather, they enjoy it as means of entertainment, or even as a brief summary of the previous jihad of their ancestors. This song echoes the value of holy war although in times of peace like today, there is no armed war should be fought.

CONCLUSION

Knowing the immense influence the *Hikayat Prang Sabi* holds, it is scarcely an exaggeration to conclude that it is able to withstand the test of time. Being repeatedly chanted on stage performances and subject to generations of analysis, it could likely secure the text from oblivion. The episode of ‘Ainulmardiyyah has been remembered as the appealing part in it. ‘Ainulmardiyyah is perceived by some as a heavenly being with sensual traits destined for the fallen mujahidin. This perception might have developed from reductive understanding of a very complex nature of divine order to wage a holy war. Despite the explicit profane portrayal of ‘Ainulmardiyyah, the fondness for marrying the houri has never been established as the main motivation of waging a holy war. The episode of ‘Ainulmardiyyah posits at least two positions of women in relation to the men’s jihad journey. First, the men ought to give up the women who hold them to remain seated in the world because they are perceived as hindrance for men in gaining martyrdom. Second, the women worthier to pursue are

the houris; a martyr will marry 70 of them. The highest achievement the martyrs could gain is accompaniment of ‘Ainulmardiyyah, the queen of the houris.

NOTES

- 1 Voorhoeve (1994:72) in his Catalogue of Acehnese manuscripts in the library of Leiden University and other collections outside Aceh identified a range of texts with the Prang Sabi theme. Owing to their thematic similarities, he grouped them under the title “XIIIa Hikayat Prang Sabi.”
- 2 A cartoon that seems to ridicule the houris’ companionship in the paradise is seen, for example, on https://www.toonpool.com/cartoons/Another%20day%20in%20paradise_94995?page=3.
- 3 Reformasi 1998 marked the change in the Indonesian history of democracy. East Timor people were given the chance to vote whether they want the province to remain as part of Indonesia or not. Since the majority chose a separation from Indonesia, the province ever since became a country. Aceh’s demand for a referendum was rejected.

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