

Symbol of Fertility and Prosperity of the Pasai Ocean Civilization in the Era of Sultanah Nahrasyiah

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ABSTRACT

Background. The Samudera Pasai Kingdom was one of the most famous Kingdoms of its time. Its territorial area has now become the government area of North Aceh Regency, Aceh Province. Samudera Pasai was once called the first Islamic Kingdom in the Southeast Asian region.

Purpose. This research aims to find out the symbol of fertility and prosperity of the Samudera Pasai Civilization from the tomb of Sultanah Nahrasyiah. Through field observation and data analysis, anthropological methods are used to understand and analyze human behavior and culture.

Method. This method involves using various data collection techniques, including interviews, observations, questionnaires, and document analysis, to obtain in-depth information about a group or society's social, cultural, and mindset.

Results. The Samudera Pasai Civilization, during the reign of Sultanah Nahrasyiah, displayed rich symbols of fertility and prosperity. These were evident in various motifs found on the Sultanah's tomb, including banana trees, cotton trees, lotus flowers, and chandeliers. These symbols reflect the civilization's cultural values and beliefs regarding abundance and well-being during this significant historical period.

Conclusion. The study results show that the symbols of fertility and prosperity are described as banana tree motifs, cotton tree motifs, lotus flower motifs, and chandelier motifs (chandeliers).

KEYWORDS

Fertility, Nahrasyiah, Prosperity, Samudera Pasai , Sultanah, Symbol

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INTRODUCTION

The Samudera Pasai Kingdom has been established since the 13th century AD (Taqiyuddin, 2002:67). This was conveyed in the proof of the discovery of the king's tomb artifacts by researchers *Center for Information of Samudra Pasai Heritage (CAPTION)*. Ibrahim Abduh, in the Outline of the Kings of Jeumpa, mentioned that the spread of Islam actually started in the 7th century in the routine of business by the Persians, Indians, Chinese, and Arabs. Abduh also emphasized that the spread of Islam in the Jeumpa Kingdom as an Islamic Kingdom (pioneer) had begun after the arrival of Shahrir Salman in 770 AD in Jeumpa City. The evidence was obtained from the research of researchers in the genealogical framework, including those written by Haslinda, with the title *Genealogy of Kings in Aceh* (2011).



Hasyimi in his work, *Idharul Haqq fi Mamlakatil Ferlah w'l-Fasi* (Haslinda, 2011:97) mentions that the difference in how to see the entry of Islam into Southeast Asia is from the perspective of mahzab. The existence of Shia Mahzab and Sunni Mahzab in Aceh in the past has influenced the framework of knowledge in Aceh, including in looking at the introduction of Islam into Southeast Asia. This is one of the problems of various types of research that form various perceptions and different results.

Along with the expansion of the administrative area, the former two kingdoms are now divided into two districts, namely Bireun Regency and North Aceh Regency. The North Aceh Regency area itself is the main area or location of the heritage of the Samudera Pasai Kingdom, while the Bireun Regency is a former relic of the Jeumpa Kingdom. There are many remains of the two former kingdoms. The Samudera Pasai Kingdom in North Aceh Regency has more neatly arranged remains than the former Jeumpa Kingdom. Among the remains of the former Samudera Pasai Kingdom that still exists today are the tombstones of King Samudera Pasai, which are still well-maintained and neatly arranged. Of the many tombstones of King Samudera Pasai in North Aceh Regency, there is one tombstone that is large tall, has more motifs, is unique and, awesome, and magnificent. The headstone is a tombstone belonging to Sultanah Nahrasyiah, the 6th Sultan of the Kingdom of Samudera Pasai. Nahrasyiah is the son of Sultan Zainal Abidin (Sultan III Samudera Pasai). This research aims to find out the motives in the tomb of Sultanah Nahrasyiah which anthropologically depicts fertility and prosperity in the era of her Government.

Literally, a tomb is a grave building, while a headstone is a sign. The mention of tombstones by experts is considered more appropriate than tombs, because tombstones symbolize signs while tombstones are markers. The shape and size of the headstone varies. Usually, large tombstones are used for burial places of leaders, kings, or heroes. In daily life, the tomb is also called the burial place or the last residence of someone who has ever been on the throne, wherever the tomb is, the tombstone always accompanies it. The presence of a tombstone in it is a sign that someone has died. The tombstones in a tomb are usually made of stone or objects made of hard materials. Some tombstones are generally inscribed with the journey of someone who has lived or been in power. There are also those who just explain the time of birth and the time of death in the form of sentences or writing. Sentences on tombstones can be in the form of death verses or genealogy. Usually, long verses or genealogical sentences are only written on the tombstones of kings who once ruled as a sign that the owner of the tomb is a great or famous person.

The tombstone of Sultanah Nahrasyiah is called one of the most beautiful tombstones in the world. This can be seen from the motifs and verse sentences contained in the headstone. The Sultanah Nahrasyiah Tomb Park has currently been restored by the North Aceh Regency Government. This is in line with the tomb of other kings of Samudera Pasai. The existence of Sultanah Nahrasyiah's tombstone is special because of its unusual shape found in other tombstones in Aceh. Its very tall shape is one of the accents of Sultanah Nahrasyiah's tombstone.

The shape of Sultanah Nahrasyiah's tombstone looks bigger and more magnificent than the tombstone of other kings in Samudera Pasai (Interview: Ahmad, March 20, 2017). Based on the results of observations and measurements, the tombstone of Sultanah Nahrasyiah has a length of 239 cm, a bushy of 144 cm, and a height of 190 cm. According to Ahmad or as he is commonly called Nek Amat, one of the community leaders in the village Kuta Krueng, mentioning that the tombstone of Sultanah Nahrasyiah is the only largest and most beautiful in Aceh. The headstone is made of limestone and a little granite on some sides. This headstone is also a gift from the Kingdom of Malabar, India. The size that exceeds the size of the tombstones of other kings shows that the period of Sultanah Nahrasyiah's rule was the grandest tombstone in Southeast Asia.

In addition, the stone, which is one of the most difficult to find in Aceh, suggests that the tombstone does not come from Aceh or Pasai but from outside Aceh. Nek Amat also mentioned that the tombstone of Sultanah Nahrasyiah is a special gift from the Kingdom of Malabar, India. The kingdom is believed to have been one of the federal states of the Samudra Pasai Kingdom at that time (Interview: Ahmad, March 20, 2017).

Currently, the tomb of Sultanah Nahrasyiah has become a place of pilgrimage for some people in Aceh and its surroundings. Sultanah Nahrasyiah herself is the great-grandson of Sultan Malik Ash Sholih, the founder of the Samudra Pasai Kingdom. Sultanah Nahrasyiah also conquered several Kingdoms around the Pasai Ocean and built good relations with several of its conquered Kingdoms; this is evidenced by the presence of Sultanah Nahrasyiah's tombstone, which was a gift from the Kingdom of Malabar India.

The tombstone of Sultanah Nahrasyiyah has several motifs of growing plants that decorate her tomb and is combined with Arabic calligraphy in several beautiful forms of khat (Haslinda 2011: 108). Ibrahim Alfian and Cristian Snouck Hourgronje (Acehsky, 2012) also strengthen this reference. Snouck mentioned that Sultanah Nahrasyiah's tombstone is beautiful, and Sultanah Nahrasyiah herself was a female ruler who became the center of attention of world historians at that time.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research method that is often used in anthropology is the observation method. With this method, the researcher acts as an observer who records every detail of human life and behavior in a certain society. In this observation process, researchers not only observe, but also try to understand the social context, customs, and values inherent in the culture being studied. Another research method that is often used is interviews. In the interview, the researcher leads a conversation with an individual or group who has in-depth knowledge of the culture being studied. Through interviews, researchers can gain insight and a deeper understanding of the daily lives, beliefs, and worldviews of the people who are part of the culture. Anthropological research methods are scientific approaches used to understand and analyze human behavior as well as culture through field observation and data analysis. This method involves the use of a variety of data collection techniques, including interviews, observations, questionnaires, and document analysis to obtain in-depth information about the social, cultural, and mindset of a group or society.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Motif of the Banana Tree of Nisan Sultanah Nahrasyiah

This motif is called the banana tree because of its shape similar to a banana tree. The banana tree motif is interpreted as a symbol of fertility. By describing a banana tree that has two bunches, other meanings that can be mentioned include leadership led by women and a prosperous country. The philosophy of this banana tree motif is that it can live even if it is surrounded by other wild plants, even if left unattended, the banana tree will grow on its own.

Banana trees are trees that are able to survive and even grow big again even though they are cut to almost level with the ground. Banana trees will not die as long as their roots are still present and alive. Banana trees that have been cut down many times will still grow back, and provide benefits to other living things by producing edible fruits. This describes the figure of Nahrasyiah who is gentle and able to manage his kingdom.

The motif or ornament of this banana tree with two bunches is located on several sides of Sultanah Nahrasyiah's tombstone. There are seven pieces on the back of the tombstone and two each on the left and right sides. If you add up, then there is a banana bunch motif on the tombstone of Sultanah Nahrasyiah.

In Indonesian culture, the number 11 is believed to be a lucky number. In addition, 11 is referred to as a strong spiritual sign of awakening and consciousness. The number 11 is also called a number that is in harmony with the purpose of life. For Chinese society, 11 is called a number that has high spiritual value and knowledge.



Figure 1. Banana tree motif (Ichsan, 2017)

Sultanah Nahrasyiah Tombstone Cotton Tree Motif

This motif is called the cotton tree motif. According to some opinions of the local community, the cotton motif found on the tombstone of Sultanah Nahrasyiah is interpreted as a symbol of justice during the Samudera Pasai Kingdom. The cotton tree here has a philosophy of coolness and peace. The cotton tree was first discovered in India. In India, cotton has been cultivated for the past three thousand years. Herodotus wrote of Indian cotton: "*There is a tree that grows wild there, the fruit of which is a thread of wool more beautiful than the wool of. The Indians made their clothes from the feathers of this tree.*"

Apart from Samudera Pasai, this cotton tree motif is widely found in the Jami' Cambay mosque. The researcher's analysis suggests that this motif also influences Hindu culture.

In Indonesia, cotton is symbolized as clothing or the second need after food. Prosperity and welfare are more dominant symbols of cotton. On the tombstone of Sultanah Nahrasyiah, there are

seven cotton motifs. According to Sarah Scoop, the number 7 means perfection of knowledge. In addition, the number 7 is identified with immortality.



Figure 2. Cotton tree motif (Ichsan, 2017)

Lotus Flower Motif of Sultanah Nahrasyiah's Tomb

This motif is called the lotus flower motif because of its proximity to the lotus flower. However, according to the custodian of Sultanah Nahrasyiah's tomb, the motif is better known as the sunflower motif; even today, people still name it the sunflower motif. From the results of the analysis, based on the sources obtained, the motif is more appropriately named the lotus flower motif. The lotus flower is a flower that originated in India. The flower is also very well known in China.

For Hindus and Buddhists, the lotus flower is dubbed as a sacred flower because it is a symbol of holiness. This is reflected in the many paintings and statues of the Buddha or Lord Shiva who is meditating on lotus flowers. Perhaps, in this case, the symbol of purity also wants to be attached to Sultanah Nahrasyiah. The purity in question is not getting married but the purity of the Etihad, sika, and identity of a leader that wants to be conveyed.



Figure 3. Lotus Flower

The lotus flower's philosophy is that it still looks graceful even if it grows on muddy mud or murky water. The flower always looks beautiful. Lotus flowers bloom in light and contract in dark and night. Similarly, human beings will open their minds when they are touched by science. On the contrary, his mind will be closed if he is not touched by science. Perhaps this symbol is what he wants to put on a Sultanah Nahrasyiah. There are 16 lotuses on the right and 16 on the left sides. If you add it up, there are 32 lotus motifs in it. For some people, the number 32 is interpreted as the fulfillment of God's promise (blessing) and the season of growth and spiritual renewal.

Candlestick Motif (lamp) hanging on the tombstone of Sultanah Nahrasyiah

The candlestick motif or better known as a chandelier. This motif is very prominent on the tombstone of Sultanah Nahrasyiah. According to the beliefs of the local community, this candlestick motif should only be used to decorate the tomb of a glorified person. In this case, it appears to be a cult. In the world, there are several tombstones that are accompanied by candlestick ornaments, including the tombstone of Sidi Abdullah in Cot Intana Kuta Krueng, North Aceh Regency, the tombstone of Ahmad al-Kazaruni in Cambay Gujarat, and the tombstone Sulnah Nahrasyiah in North Aceh Regency. Still according to the beliefs of the local community, the shape of this candlestick is a kind of illustration of a lamp in heaven or called the light of heaven. That's why this motif can only be used on some tombstone buildings. On the Nahrasyiah tombstone, there are 16 candlestick motifs on the right side and 16 on the kir side. The total number of 32 symbolizes that candlesticks are present as spiritual renewal and religiosity.

**Figure 4. Candlestick Motif (Ichsan, 2017)**

CONCLUSION

The meaning contained in the ornament of the Sultana Tomb symbolizes happiness and heaven, and the shape of this candlestick is a kind of illustration of the lamp in heaven, or the light of heaven. The fulfillment of God's promises (blessings) and the season of growth and spiritual renewal is the philosophy of the Lotus flower, the flower always looks beautiful and attractive even if it is located in murky water or mud. This illustrates that the human mind will open "bloom" when touched by science. Prosperity and well-being are symbolized by cotton. Fertility is symbolized by banana tree ornaments. The philosophy of this banana tree motif is that it can live even if it is surrounded by other wild plants.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

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