

**ISLAMIC JAVANESE IDEAS  
IN THE POETRY COLLECTION OF *AIR KATA KATA*  
BY SINDHUNATA**

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**Abstract:** This study aims to describe the views of Islamic Javanese ideas in Sindhunata's poem *Air Kata Kata*. The Islamic Javanese view is obtained by using the deep interpretation of the symbols in the texts and images/ paintings contained in poems by a Catholic Pastor who has a humanist spirit and is familiar with Islamic Javanese life. Based on this research, the researcher obtained an Islamic Javanese view in Catholic poet's works who was close to the daily life of Moslems. Therefore, his works are influenced by Islam and the life of Moslems.

**Keywords:** Islamic Javanese Ideas, Symbol, Sindhunata's Poetry

**A. INTRODUCTION**

Not many literary works, especially poetry, are juxtaposed with pictures or paintings. However, the collaboration between poetry and pictures/

paintings can be read in Sindhunata's poetry collection *Air Kata Kata* which was published by Galang Press and Bayu Media in 2004. There are 71 titles in the book with 196 pages. Not only that, the poet who is familiarly called *Romo* Sindhu collaborates with 23 artists into his work to make words into pictures or paintings until the two different genres can be enjoyed, either in one frame in the form of poetry or separately, just poetry or the picture/painting alone (as Sindhunata said, 2004: xv).

*Romo* Sindhu as a poet who composed a poetry collection *Air Kata Kata* did not randomly choose the artists invited to complete his poems with pictures/paintings. This is evident from the names of selected artists, namely 1) Agus Suwage, 2) Agus Suyitno, 3) Alex Luthfi, 4) Arahmaiani, 5) Bambang Toko, 6) Djokopekik, 7) Drs. Hendro Suseno, 8) Edi Sunaryo, 9) Eko Nugroho, 10) Hari Budiono, 11) Hermanu, 12) Ismanto, 13) Ivan Sagito, 14) Nasirun, 15) Ong Hari Wahyu, 16) Pande Ketut Taman, 17) Putu Sutawijaya, 18) Sekar Jatiningrum, 19) Sigit Santosa, 20) Sulasno, 21) Ugo Oentoro, 22) Yamyuli Dwi Iman, and 23) Yuswantoro Adi. Djoko Pekik is one of the artists chosen by *Romo* Sindhu, his works are appreciated even up to hundreds of millions *rupiah*. This proves the reputation of the artists whose works adorn poems in the poetry collection *Air Kata Kata* are not amateur artists or painters.

The interesting thing contained in the poetry collection *Air Kata Kata* besides the new pattern of poetry juxtaposed with famous professional artists or painters is the Islamic Javanese view. The Islamic Javanese view is the view of Islamic Javanese (*Jawa Islam*), the perspective used is someone who is Javanese with Javanese mindset, lifestyle, and philosophy of life and is a Muslim. The difference between a Muslim Javanese (*Jawa Islam*) and a Javanese Muslim (*Islam Jawa*) is the basis of his life which prioritizes his Islam compared to his Javanese.

People who read prayers by saying them like magic formulas (*mantra*) even use magic formulas (*mantra*) incorporated with Arabic words in praying, Islamic stories, and still believing in offerings (*Sesajen*), Javanese-style prayers, and Javanese thinking patterns and the Javanese patterns of life, this is what is called Islamic Javanese (*Jawa Islam*). On the contrary, the Javanese Muslim (*Islam Jawa*) is someone who has begun to lose his Javanese identity and his Islamness is dominant. He/she rarely uses magic formulas (*mantra*), offerings, and Javanese-style prayers and even does not use them. Usually Javanese Muslim (*Islam Jawa*) is more submissive to the Islam teachings; the

Javanese-ness is still attached only to the mention of the name of God, such as *Gusti Pangeran*, *Gusti Allah*, and Javanese Muslim (*Islam Jawa*) does not worship with Javanese offerings, prayers, and lifestyle as Javanese. It is not used in everyday life.

## **B. RESEARCH METHODS**

The qualitative descriptive method is used with content analysis to describe the phenomena, forms, activities, characteristics, changes, relationships, similarities and differences, and other phenomena (Sukmadinata, 2005: 72). Content analysis is used in order to aim to know the meaning, position, and relationship between various concepts, policies, programs, activities, events, then this analysis is used to find out their benefits, results, or impacts (Sukmadinata, 2005: 81-82).

In this research, the researcher analyzed 10 poems from 71 poems in Sindhunata's poetry collection *Air Kata Kata*. The poems chosen were based on the Islamic Javanese view (*Jawa Islam*) found in the poems. Furthermore, Islamic Javanese view (*Jawa Islam*) is described through symbols contained in poems and images/paintings, and then the symbolic meanings contained in each poem are described.

## **C. SINDHUNATA'S BACKGROUND**

Sindhunata is known as a *Romo* or Catholic religious leader but he is humanistic and has a close and familiarity with a thick Islamic life. He has given spiritual teachings to the Catholic Church St. Antonius Padua located in Kotabaru, Yogyakarta. Romo Sindhu was born 66 years ago in Batu City, East Java, on May 12, 1952. He was known as a journalist, feature writer, an East Javanese who lived as a Javanese and was interested in the Javanese mindset and lifestyle, and was familiar with Muslims who in this study are called Islamic Javanese (*Jawa Islam*) (Romo Sindhu can also be referred to as Javanese Catholic who is equivalent to Islamic Javanese (*Jawa Islam*)).

In 1974-1977, he worked in *Teruna* Magazine. He became a journalist in *Harian Kompas* and editor in chief of *BASIS* Magazine. Sindhunata turned out to be more interested in the world of football and features. He has received theological education at the Driyarkara School of Philosophy, the Catholic Institute of Theology and Philosophy, Kentungan, Yogyakarta, and completed his doctoral program in Munich, Germany. He wrote in Javanese in *Blencong*

in *Harian Suara Merdeka* and wrote *Aburing Kupu-Kupu Kuning*, *Ndherek Sang Dewi ing Ereng-Ereng Redi Merapi*, and *Sumur Kitiran Kencana*. This background is the reference to how Sindhunata really loves the world of Java, along with its subtleties and dynamics.

Sindhunata with a life history that has been conveyed clearly can present the Islamic Javanese view into several poems in the poetry collection *Air Kata Kata*, although this view is vague because he was a devout Catholic. Seeing his strong position and trust, he would tend to include more Catholic nuances than his views on Islam. Of course, his knowledge and thoughts contained in several poems are based on his interaction with Muslims, especially Javanese Muslims, or the results of his reading on the Islamic world and its followers. This is in line with the opinion of Wellek and Warren (1993: 109) that as a form of fictional artwork, literature cannot simply be separated from the events that occur in human life. This explanation also applies to Sindhunata and his works

Kuntowijoyo asserted (2006: 171) that literary works can be a means for authors to convey thoughts, feelings, and responses about an event, and literary work is the re-creation of a historical event in accordance with their knowledge and imagination. This opinion can be proved by the statement Sindhunata (2004: xv) “*Air Kata Kata are just about what I encounter, experience, and feel: about the sacred to the dirty, about the noble to the low, about the rational to the irrational, about prayer to curses, about God to man.*” Thus, of course, Teeuw’s opinion is true. He said that literary work was created not in a cultural vacuum but literary work was a reflection, imitation, or imagery of reality (1988: 224).

The creation of literary works in addition to coming from a broad insight on political, economic, social, cultural, and so on, it also comes from the reality of everyday life that occurs in the midst of society - the reality is given a vision, changed according to imagination so that the world is written in literary work is not the real world (Wardani, 2009: 2). Literary reflection on society is possible only in certain aspects of the realities that occur in society (Kleden in Endraswara, 2013: 87).

The things reflected by the literary work can be in the form of the goodness of human life and its badness (Stendel in Endraswara, 2013: 88). The authors with all his senses certainly record things that happen around him and the community environment that surrounds his life and precipitate the

recording. Then he poured the recording into a series of events to become a neat story in the form of novels, short stories, or novella, poetry and staged dialogues. This process is in accordance with Sindhunata's previous statement, and it cannot be avoided that literary works are strongly influenced by the social background of culture, the ideology of writers, environment, and readers who appreciate the literary work (Isnaniah, 2014).

The author as a member of the community is likely to be obsessed by certain socio-cultural conditions and then he creates literary works that reflect his social responses (therefore the step of the study that needs to be done is to examine the structure of the text and then link the structure with his socio-cultural groups and with his worldview (Goldman, 1981: 118). This is caused by literary works that contain the power of social knowledge (Sekeres and Gregg, 2007: 473). Therefore, the substance of literature, in this case including poetry, will be strongly influenced by the social context of the author.

The author's social context includes socio-cultural background, biography, ideas, philosophy, and so on (Waluyo, 2002: 63). In addition, the author's social context can be identified based on biography to find out the life story and the social background of the author (Ratna, 2013: 56). Obviously, Father Sindhu has reflected on the reality of life in the socio-cultural community around him, the Islamic Javanese society.

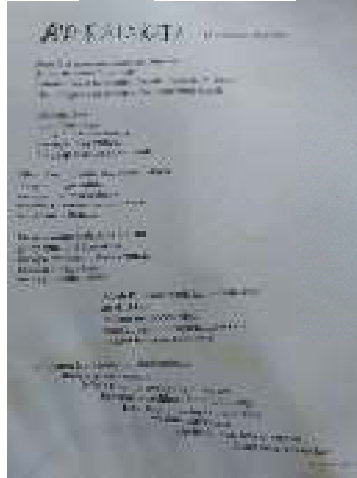
#### **D. ISLAMIC JAVANESE VIEWS ON THE POETRY COLLECTION *AIR KATA KATA***

Based on the research, there are 10 poems that contain Islamic Javanese views. The 10 poems are 1) *Air Kata Kata* (p. 16), 2) *Wak Duljangkep* (p. 20), 3) *Rep Kedhep* (p. 24), 4) *Lir Ilir* (p. 29), 5) *Rumah Pohon* (p. 36), 6) *Ngelmu Pring* (p. 40), 7) *Balada Sebuah Bokong* (p. 50), 8) *Mantra Tolak Bala* (p. 80), 9) *Sembah Raga* (p. 112), and 10) *Sega Thiwul* (p. 150). The following is an analysis of Javanese Islamic views on Sindhunata's the poetry collection *AIR KATA KATA*.

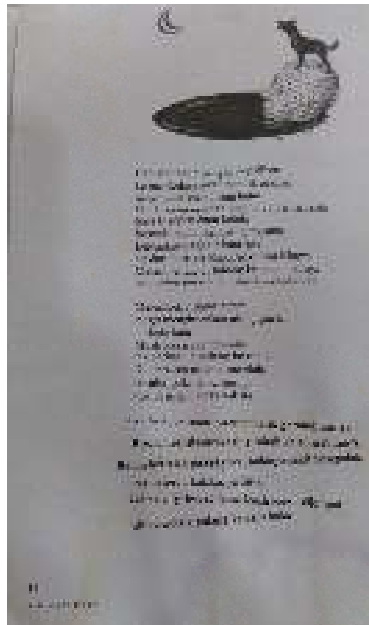
1. Air Kata Kata



There is a keyword “the sign of a crossing (x)” in the poem.



There are two keywords *Mbah Koen* and *air kata kata* in the poem.



There are two keywords *Bapa Adam* and *Ibu Khawa* in the poem.



There are keywords *dupa*, *Topi Miring*, *oplosan*, *requiem*, and *mampirminum* in the poem.

With the sign of a crossing (x), the researcher can find out that the poem entitled *Air Kata Kata* signifies the existence of a death because there is the society's convention of symbols in the times of the revolt carried out by the PKI. At that time, a house with a door or wall that is crossed is a murder target. It can be seen in the figure of a person whose chest crossed in a faceless state. It confirms his death. The person is well-known as *Mbah Koen* with the keywords found later even though Mbah Koen's life history cannot be found. However, the name *Koen* or *Kun* (when spoken) is a name commonly used by Javanese.

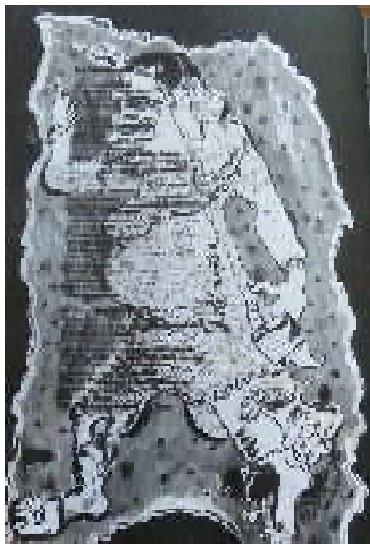
The keyword *air kata kata* in the poem can be interpreted with many meanings, in accordance with other words that accompany it. It can be seen that the words *air kata kata* are defined as the word of God, the water of life, or even the magic formulas (*mantra*). The researcher found the keywords *Bapa Adam* and *Ibu Khawa* which represented Javanese pronunciation in mentioning Prophet Adam and his wife. The sound is not “*h*” (for *Hawa*) but “*kh*” (for *Khawa*). The mention of names with certain pronunciation can be listened to in magic formulas (*mantra*) or prayers recited by Javanese at a religious event, worship, or other events held by Islamic Javanese (*Jawa Islam*).

Not only that, the keywords *Topi Miring*, *oplosan*, *requiem*, and *mampirminum* are also words that represent Javanese even though they are Muslims. They are still familiar with *Topi Miring* and drink *oplosan* (various types of liquor mixed into one). Meanwhile, the keyword *requiem* is taken from the church word, this is because the poet is a Catholic leader, which means death. Furthermore, the keyword *mampirminum* is the philosophy or the worldview of Javanese people in interpreting life as a long and far journey. They consider the world only as a shortstop. Overall, the poem *Air Kata Kata* contains “the reminders of a dead” delivered by the poet to readers through his work.

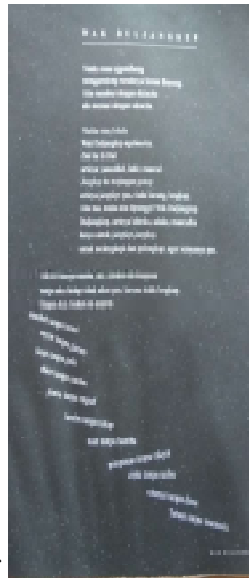
## 2. *Wak Duljangkep*

The poem *Wak Duljangkep* was delivered in the form of magic formulas (*mantra*) and *Semar* picture. These two elements really cannot be separated from the Javanese habits even though he embraced Islam. This can be seen in the following poem.

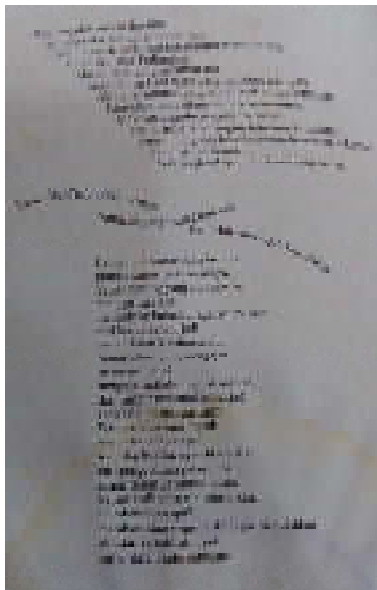
Siti Fatimah, Joko Nurkamto, Budi Setiawan, dan Ngadiso: Islamic Javanese Ideas in The Poetry Collection of Air Kata Kata By Sindhunata... (hal. 246-261)



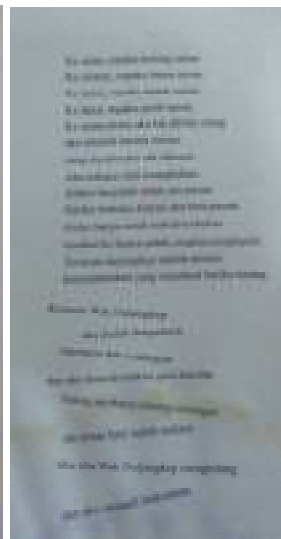
There is a keyword image of *Semar* which is a Javanese medium in conveying the messages of life to the public.



There are keywords *lelaku*, *ngelmu*, *jumedhul*, and *jangkep* in the poem.



There are the keywords *Samar* *itulahSemar* and *Samar yang Semar* in the poem.



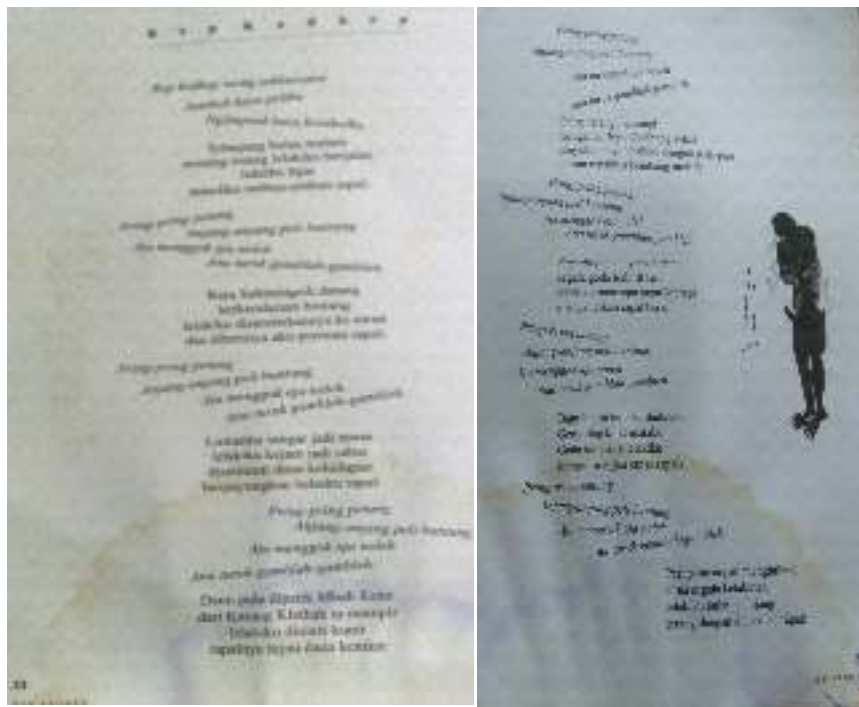
There are the keywords *njedhul*, *jangkep-jangkepan*, *duljangkep*, *jagongan*, *wedangan*, *gula kacang*, and *omong-omongan* in the poem.



Based on the keywords obtained from the poem *Wak duljangkep*, it can be seen that the Javanese view of life in relation to life is actually only complementary. This view is no different from the Islamic view of life in this world that nothing is created in vain, everything is useful according to its respective portion or role in the world. The poet conveyed the message with a light story in the style of Javanese people who like *jagongan* (gathering together on a topic), *wedangan* (a joint drinking activity usually held in a place called *angkringan*), *gula kacang* (one of the traditional Javanese foods made from palm sugar) and crunchy peanuts), and *omong-omongan* (relaxed discussion). The habits are carried out by almost all Javanese, even though they are Muslim.

### 3. *Rep Kedhep*

One more poem by Sindhunata delivered in the form of magic formulas (*mantra*) is the poem *Rep Kedhep*. The symbolic meaning of the poem can be explained as follows.

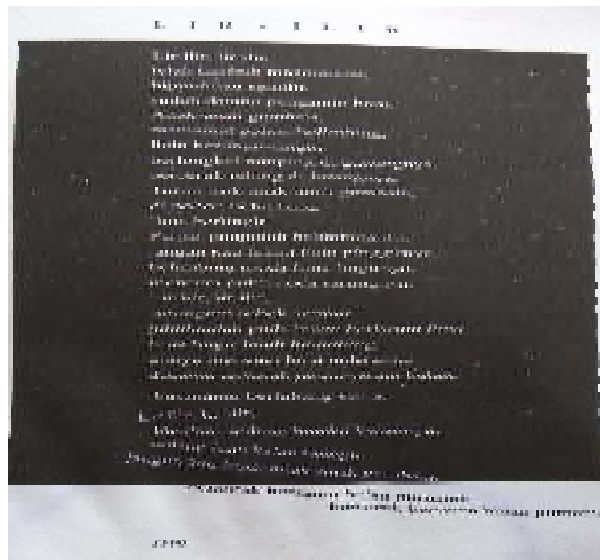


The keywords can be seen in the 1st verse which is repeated in the following verses. These keywords are utterances that tend to be sung in

traditional Javanese games. But the reality is that the utterances are magic formulas (*mantra*) to get courage, strength, and self-confidence that is considered effective for Javanese who believes in it, even though they are Muslims.

#### 4. *Lir Ilir*

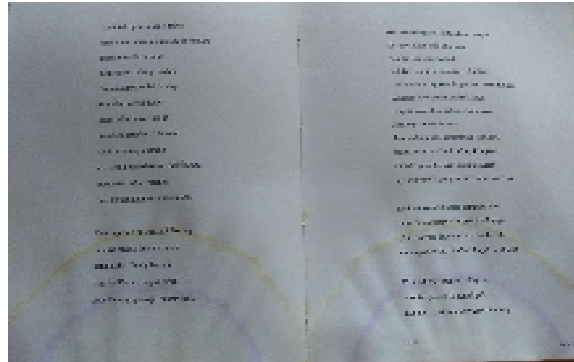
There is an Islamic Javanese view in the poem *Rumah Pohon* and *Sega Thiwul* which is known through the mention of the name *Seh Bela-Belu* (found in the Javanese belief), the Prophet Khidr, and Prophet Sulaiman (found in Muslim beliefs) in the poem. Through the poem, someone is invited to believe in the events as well as the existence of *Seh Bela-Belu*, the Prophet Khidr, and Prophet Sulaiman who in the list of gods (*Seh Bela-Belu*) and prophets are not mentioned 'legitimately' or 'formally' (Prophet Khidir) as the gods and other prophets listed in the 25 Prophets who are recognized and believed in Islam.



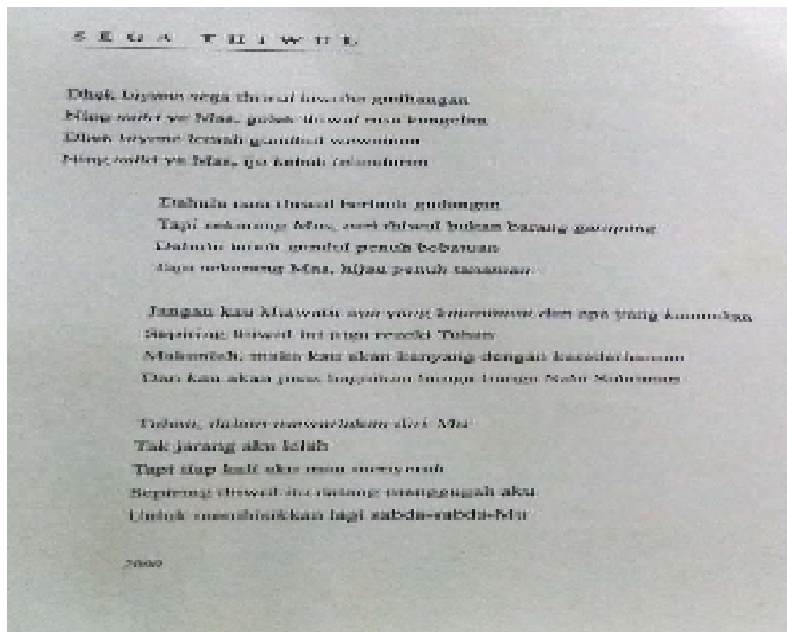
#### 5. *Rumah Pohon dan Sega Thiwul*

There is an Islamic Javanese view in the poem *Rumah Pohon* and *Sega Thiwul* which is known through the mention of the name *Seh Bela-Belu* (found in the Javanese belief), the Prophet Khidr, and Prophet Sulaiman (found in Muslim beliefs) in the poem. Through the poem, someone is invited to believe in the events as well as the existence of *Seh Bela-Belu*, the Prophet Khidr, and Prophet Sulaiman who in the list of gods (*Seh Bela-Belu*) and

prophets are not mentioned ‘legitimately’ or ‘formally’ (Prophet Khidzir) as the gods and other prophets listed in the 25 Prophets who are recognized and believed in Islam.



In addition, choosing the name of Prophet Sulaiman by Sindhunata is worthy of consideration. The choosing was included in the context of Javanese rice *Thiwul*. How meaningful rice or *sega thiwul* is for the Javanese. *Thiwul* is not only a symbol of food sufficiency but also simplicity that is increasingly difficult to find due to its scarcity among abundant property possessions, such as the prosperity of Prophet Sulaiman. The following is the poem *Sega Thiwul*.



## 6. *Ngelmu Pring*

Through the poem *Ngelmu Pring*, the reader is invited to remember God, himself, his death, and his relationship with others. It can be known from the words *eling dhirine* (self-aware), *eling pepadhane* (remembering others), *eling patine* (remembering death), and *eling Gustine* (remembering God). Not only that, through the poem *Ngelmu Pring*, the reader is invited to live simply but meaningfully in many ways (knowledge, wealth, friendship and spirituality), and be able to adapt well with others, and fully believe in his Lord. The following is a symbol of images and words used by the Sindhunata as media to deliver messages.

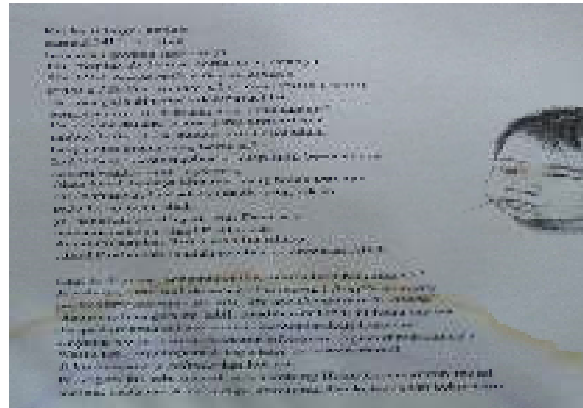


For Javanese, both Muslim and others, *pring* or bamboo has a special meaning. Bamboo is a basic material to meet the basic needs from food (*rebung* or edible young bamboo), clothing (bamboo can be likened to a genital covering /shame from the view of people), to shelter (as building materials and other household needs in the kitchen). Not only that, bamboo for Javanese can be interpreted as robustness, fortitude, loyalty, and easiness of life wherever bamboo is and in any season. Thus, the Islamic Javanese are expected in their lives to imitate the attributes of God and to be humanist.

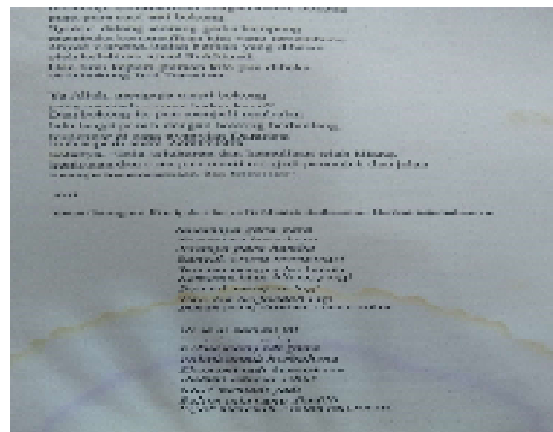
## 7. *Balada Sebuah Bokong*

Sindhunata mentioned *bokong* (or a buttock) in his poem *Balada Sebuah Bokong* because he was inspired by the Inul Daratista phenomenon which became a long polemic in Indonesia. He also slipped his view as a Javanese towards Inul Daratista who is a Muslima. It was stated that although Inul

Daratista's dance *ngeboris* considered to be amoral, she is a devout Muslim and has a devotion to Allah SWT. It can be seen from the following poem.



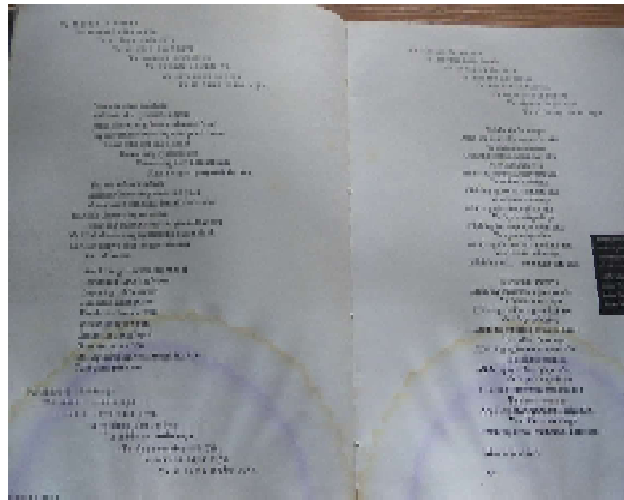
Sindhunata as a Catholic also reflects an issue in his poems with the term used by Muslims. It can be seen in the following poem.



### 8. Mantra Tolak Bala dan Sembah Raga

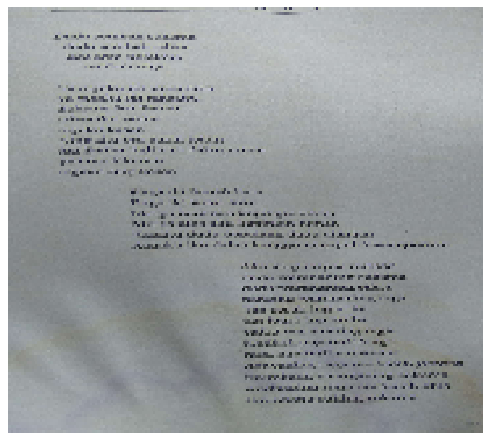
In both poems *Mantra Tolak Bala* and *Sembah Raga*, Sindhunata greatly utilizes his skill in creating magic formulas (*mantra*) into poems in a distinctive style. The expression of the mantra that is closely related and familiar in the life of Javanese even though he is Muslim can be seen in the following poems.

Siti Fatimah, Joko Nurkamto, Budi Setiawan, dan Ngadiso: Islamic Javanese Ideas in The Poetry Collection of Air Kata Kata By Sindhunata... (hal. 246-261)



The poem *Mantra Tolak Bala*

Magic formulas (*mantra*) are still often believed and used by its adherents, especially Javanese, even though they are Muslims and some of them forbid reading and using magic formulas (*mantra*) because magic formulas (*mantra*) can be called *shirk* or associating partners with Allah SWT. However, with beautiful composition, Sindhunata managed to bring spiritual messages through a variety of ways, including the recitation of mantra, which is considered forbidden by fanatical Muslims.



The poem *Sembah Raga*

Reading the poem *Sembah Raga* will remind someone about Muslims' prayer or Muslims' worship. Implicitly, Sindhunata wants to present the

Javanese worship through the poem. The worship or the prayer that uses Javanese methods and Javanese readings show that God masters various languages. Nothing is wrong. Even though someone is Muslim but he knows and understands Javanese, then he can pray and “worship” to God in the Javanese style. Although for other Muslims, it is not justified.

## E. CONCLUSION

Based on the research that has been carried out, there are 10 poems from 71 poems in the poetry collection *Air Kata Kata* in which there is an Islamic Javanese view. The Islamic Javanese view is obtained from keywords in poems and symbols in representative paintings. The mention of the names (figures and God in Islam) is used and processed with the thoughts, philosophies or the views of life, and the pattern of Islamic Javanese’s life that are more realized using magic formulas (*mantra*) in poems. Sindhunata concocted them uniquely in his poems in various languages, Javanese, Indonesian, Latin, and English.

The disclosure of Islamic Javanese views in the poetry collection *Air Kata Kata* has become a window that can be seen by the public that in fact, Javanese thoughts are able to influence the mindset and lifestyle in religion, especially Islam and Catholicism and others (*Aliran Kepercayaan*) in general. These conditions make the audience understand how the diversities are very beautiful. The diversities do not cause a split. It can even side by side harmoniously even to literary works, especially poems.

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