

Popular Arabic Terms in Indonesia: Forms and Its Meanings

MamanLesmana

Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Indonesia

Corresponding Author: MamanLesmana

Abstract: In Indonesia, there is a phenomenon that we might not find in other countries, namely the use of Arabic terms at certain times and purposes. The use of the Arabic terms to give a certain understanding of ideas in Indonesian society has been going on for a long time. The problem is whether there is no other term, other than Arabic, which can be used to give an understanding of the idea, so as not to confuse the public. Arabic terms are popular in Indonesian society in various forms. This article found that from the data taken it can be concluded that one of the reasons for the emergence of Arabic terms in Indonesian society was the role of the ruling leaders at that time. This is consistent with the opinion that when Islamic power influenced the life of the nation, many words were borrowed from Arabic. Likewise when influencing power was not Islam, words would emerge from the language used by the ruler.

Keywords: Arabic, Indonesia, language, morphology, semantics

Date of Submission: 08-12-2018

Date of acceptance: 24-12-2018

I. INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, there is a phenomenon that we might not find in other countries, namely the use of Arabic terms at certain times and purposes. For example, when the idea of reform in 1998 emerged, in lieu of the collapse of the New Order regime, the Arabic term *islah* emerged, which means 'reform'. The use of this term is indeed not wrong, because the word is polysemic and one of the meanings of the word *islah* is 'reform', but lest these terms confuse the public, especially the laymen, who every day also read the newspaper and find the term. This is because there is also the term *islah*, which is also widely used for another meaning, namely 'reconciliation'.

The problem is whether there is no other term, other than Arabic, which can be used to give an understanding of the idea, so as not to confuse the public. Had the English word 'reform' not yet been commonly used to give an understanding of the idea? Or, was there no other original word from Indonesian that could be used to give an understanding of the idea?

Among Nahdhiyin residents or followers of Nahdhatul Ulama (NU), as well as among a part of Indonesian society, the term *islah* is very familiar. *Islah* is a vehicle for obtaining justice outside the formal court as an effort to reconcile two parties who have different opinions, even conflict, improve the atmosphere of the existing peace, and to rectify the problem so that differences and conflicts get a fair solution for both parties. (Zuber, 2010: 17)

Islah is a term in the Quran and Hadith which means to reconcile or settle the relationship between two people or two groups of believers who hate each other, fight to the level of war and kill each other. When it happens, all differences become liquid. But, sometimes it is difficult to happen, because each one adheres to his opinions and arguments. Therefore, *islah* is a religious order that must be carried out by every Muslim who knows the occurrence of quarrels between his brothers by paying attention to two main conditions, willing to settle cases of disputes fairly, referring to the provisions of Allah and the Messenger, and the parties to the dispute are willing to consider their opponents as brothers who are bound by the same values of the faith. In the issue, it is necessary to have clarity of heart (sincerity) and patience in striving for it, not merely a momentary political commodity and only at the level of the elite, but need to continue to be spread to the lower levels in the form of realistic actions that the community directly experience, and must be framed by objective rules and norms that uphold the values of justice and truth. (Hafidhuddin 2006: 165)

Besides *islah*, another term that is also popular lately is the term *istighasah*. *Istighasah* in language means desperate asking for help in oppressed situations and conditions, whereas in epistemological terms it is a prayer, which is a series of requests from a servant to God to be saved from all kinds of dangers, where the person who prays is like someone who drowns in the ocean. (Sambas, 2003: 125)

The word *istighasah* is often carried out when the nation of Indonesia faces a great deal, such as elections or a crisis. As often as this kind of event is held, this activity has become a kind of socio-religious

phenomenon in Indonesia and enriches the characteristics of Muslims in Indonesia. Asking for help from God is the rights and obligation of all servants, anytime and anywhere. Likewise, *istighasah* carried out by Muslims en masse and openly to beg for help to Allah for the sake of the nation's salvation. However, the model of organising *istighasah* these days has been strongly related to political nuances, hence it has become a reversed religious practice. (Zawawi, 1999: 86)

Istighasah is one form of ritual in order to remember and pray to Allah. *Istighasah* is done to remember the majesty of Allah and at the same time to seek Allah's help for ease in all matters and problems. Therefore, *istighasah* carried out by various parties has no problem in relation to the religion of Islam, provided that it is implemented and intended correctly, not on specific objectives at any time. The activity is pursued not only when in a state of urgency, but also becomes an agenda of activities that can be implemented any time (Supriyanto, 2010: 131).

The use of the Arabic terms to give a certain understanding to Indonesian society has been going on for a long time. In some parts of the Islamic communities, it is no longer strange if one of our brothers dies, then on the seventh day after his death a gathering is held. *Tahlilan* tradition is not only carried out by some of the Muslim society, even this tradition has entered the palace environment, such as the death of Mrs. Tien Soeharto, the ulama, kiai, statesmen and the public join the *tahlil* gathering. (Noor, 2009: .5).

Tahlilan is a tradition that has been practiced for generations by the majority of Indonesian Muslims. Although this action was not taught directly by the Messenger of Allah, but this activity is permissible (*jaiz*), because none of the elements contained in it are contrary to Islamic teachings, for example the recitation of *Yasin*, *tahlil*, *tahmid*, *tasbih* and the like. Therefore, the implementation of *tahlilan* is essentially a manifestation of the guidance of the Prophet Muhammad. (Sholikhin, 2010: 412).

The purpose of *tahlilan* for neighbours, relatives and friends is to console the deceased's family, reduce the burden on the family and invite them to always be patient. While for the deceased's family, they can connect and re-establish the relationship with people who made connections with the deceased, asking forgiveness for their mistakes towards their neighbours, relatives and friends, starting to settle their rights and obligations towards people who are still alive, doing good deeds and inviting pious charity together, affirming the faith, reading the verses of the Quran, making remembrances of God and giving alms, praying for the dead and pilgrims to be forgiven of their sins and averted from the torment of the grave, the torment of hell, the horror of the Resurrection Day and given the best place by Allah, remembering and reminding death that will surely end the life of every creature, preparing and inviting people to prepare for death which will surely pick up every person who is still alive. (Sholikhin, 2010: 412)

In addition, there is another tradition called *shukuran* (*syukuran*). When someone receives a favour that is considered special, so often the Muslim society holds a gathering of *shukuran*, for example after the construction of a house, mosque, place of business or something else. This thanksgiving gathering is no different from the program of *tahlilan* in the dead, namely the invited congregation reads a certain verses of the Quran, words of remembrance of God, prayer, and the Quran chapters that are read are the same as *tahlilan*, such as *al-Fatihah* and *Surah Yasin*. Thanksgiving has become a hereditary tradition, especially the Islamic community that has Nahdhiyin culture (people of the Nahdhatul Ulama Islamic organization) (Noor, 2009: .5)

Then, there is also a *slametan*. *Slametan* had existed in Java before the introduction of Hinduism in the first century AD. *Slametan* is not only the influence of Buddhism that entered Java in the sixth century, but also influenced by Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. Indeed, this gathering is not a Javanese monopoly, the Tibetans also do the same thing. In Tibet, the Lama accompany people who are dying, so that the person who will die are informed about the stages that he will pass next. (Chodjim, 2003: 302)

II. FORMS OF ARABIC TERMS USED

Arabic terms are popular in Indonesian society in various forms. For example, the word *tahlil* comes from the basic word *hallala-yuhallilu-tahlilan*, which means 'to read the sentence *laailaahailallah* (There is no God but Allah)'. According to its everyday use and understanding, *tahlil* means 'reciting a series of chapters of the Quran, selected verses and selected words of remembrance of God, beginning with reciting *Surat al-Fatihah* with the intention of giving its reward of recitation for the deceased soul that the raider intends, and then the activity is closed with a prayer'. The essence of the prayer in the *tahlil* gathering is to ask for a reward from God so that the reward from the recitation of the Quran and the selected words of remembrance of God is delivered to the deceased soul intended specifically and to the general believers, and to seek God's forgiveness for the sins. The gathering is called *tahlilan*, because the expression of *tahlil* is the most recited during the gathering and the expression of *tahlil* is the most important word of the remembrance of Allah. (Anies, 2009: 2)

The word *sadaqah* is taken from the Arabic *sadaqah*, from the root word *shidq* which means 'true'. Thus, charity is a commitment or nature of humanity to always tend to the truth. If in his life he did something deviant, then he might be a disbeliever, *munafiq* or *fasiq*. This alms orientation, of course, reminds the person to always be on the path of *sirath al-mustaqim*. One of the commitments to truth is to give charity sincerely, solely

based on a sense of dedication to Allah, which is given to the needy, orphans, people who are shackled with poverty, both financially and structurally, people who always makes use of his life to always defend the religion and other people, including in the category of street children or travellers. (Solikhin, 2010: 259)

The word *Slametan* comes from Arabic, which is the verb *salama*, which in Indonesian means 'save' and in Javanese is *slamet* or safety (Syam, 2005: 8). The ritual of *slametan* has a variety of functions, according to the context of what is celebrated by those who have the intention. What is clear is that, the main purpose is spiritual expression and a place to pray and get closer to God (Sholikhin, 2009: 41). In Java, there is a ceremony to save the deceased, namely by the act of salvation called *slametan*. According to Sunan Kalijaga, the first day's *slametan* is carried out after the third day of death, then the seventh, thirtieth, forty, hundredth and final day of the thousandth day. Because it has become a formality, the *slametan* is carried out from the first day continuously until the seventh day, followed by a jump to the fortieth day. The rest is the same, which is the hundredth and thousandth day after death. (Chodjim, 2003: 302)

The ritual of *slametan* for dying people in Java is known as charity. This practice is actually a mixed religious ritual. Islam does not advise for *slametan* ceremonies for the dead, but the custom of these offerings remains in action in Java. The leaders at that time, as well as at this time, continued to uphold the customs associated with the *slametan* ritual of the dead. When Islam entered the island of Java it did not erase the ritual of worship of spirits, gods and forces of nature. Indeed, today, the identity of Islam in Indonesia is strongly related to the practice of *slametan* of the dead, however it is actually not pure Islam.

In addition, to move or occupy a new house and in every important event where luck and safety are needed, the Javanese do *slametan*. Now there are only a few *slametan* carried out by the Javanese, and that is generally only done by those whose economy are adequate. Many *slametan* for rice fields that people used to do are now gone. This *slametan* ceremony was intended for gaining good agricultural produce. In general, the number of offerings in a *slametan* ceremony is not decided, all depending on the economic conditions of the people who hold it. (Suyono, 2007).

The word *shukuran* is an absorption word from Arabic *shukr*. Sometimes the word *tashakur* is used in daily interactions. In language, the word means 'expression of gratitude', while in the sense of terminology *shukuran* or *tashakur* means thankfulness for blessings, favours and gifts from Allah accompanied by praises to him. Thus, at least those who are grateful say the *hamdallah* pronunciation, namely *Alhamdulillah* 'aalamin. The word *shukuran* is usually heard everyday when someone receives pleasure in living in this world and expresses it in a certain expression as a sign of gratitude, and uses it for good (Siroj, 2006: 89). The word *shukuran*, among the Muhammadiyah people, is a substitute of the word *bancaan*, because the Muhammadiyah people develop more vocabulary of Arabic derivatives. The word *bancaan* comes from the word *baca* in Javanese (*bancah*) which means that there is something to be read as prayers or vows. (Syam, 2005: 8)

On the other hand, the phrase *halal bi halal* originates from the word *halla-yahullu* or *hallalaw* which means 'to untangle a tangled thread. Thus, with *halal bi halal*, bonds with people that were previously shattered or tangled are expected to reconnect or untangle. This phrase can also come from the phrase *halal bi al-halal*, in order that people sincerely accept things that have been taken heart for the sake of warm and harmonious bonds between people.

According to Quraysh Shihab, the explanation of *halal bi halal* is not found in the Quran or Hadith. The term is indeed Indonesian, and perhaps even this definition is blurred among non-Indonesians, even though those concerned understand the teachings of religion and Arabic. *Halal bi halal* is a compound word consisting of repetition of the word *halal* interrupted by one letter conjunction *ba*. If the compound word is interpreted as found in the Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), which is 'forgiveness-forgiveness on Eid Day', then there is an element of *silaturrahim* in *halal bi halal*. (Shihab, 2002: 317).

Halal bi halal is a form of activity that brings people to straighten tangled threads and resolve difficulties and problems that block the harmony of relationships (Shihab, 2002: 335) The two-word sequential *Halal bi halal* which is often spoken in the atmosphere of *Eid Al-Fitr* is one of the terms known only to the people of Indonesia. The term often raises question marks about its meaning, even the truth in terms of language, although all parties realize that the goal is to create harmony between people. (Shihab, 2002: 407) Meanwhile, *Halal bi halal* is a typical tradition of Indonesian Muslims and there is no example from the Prophet Muhammad to celebrate it during Eid. In neighbouring countries, Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei, people usually use the expressions Happy Eid Mubarak or Eid Mubarak. (Arifin, 2009: 318)

III. CONCLUSION

From the data mentioned above it can be concluded that one of the reasons for the emergence of Arabic terms in Indonesian society is the role of the ruling leaders in the respective era. The word *istighasah* and *islah* were popular during the presidency of Gus Dur, one of the great ulama in Indonesia who became a president and as a consequence, several Islamic parties occupied most of the seats in the parliament. This is in accordance with Tasmara's view that when Islamic power have an influence on the life of the nation, many words are taken

from Arabic, as found in the nation's philosophy, Pancasila, such as *daulat adil* (just sovereignty), *adab* (justice), *musyawarah* (problem-solving discussions), *mufakat* (agreements and *daulat rakyat* (society sovereignty). Likewise, when power is in the hands of other than Islam, words have also emerged from the language used by the ruler (Tasmara, 2002: 146). The emergence of modified terms between Arabic and Indonesian languages such as *sedekahan*, *slametan*, *shukuran*, *tahlilan* consisting of a combination of nouns in Arabic with the suffix *-an* in Indonesian, or the phrase *halal bi halal* consisting of a combination of noun + particle + noun in Arabic, which is not commonly used in Arab society, may have all been created by the influence of Islamic and Javanese rule in the nation.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Anies, M. Madchan, 2009, *Tahlil dan Kenduri: Tradisi Santri dan Kiai* Yogyakarta: PT LKiSPelangi Aksara
- [2]. Arifin, Gus, 2009, *Step by Step Puasa Ramadhan bagi Orang Sibuk*, Jakarta, Elex Media Komputindo
- [3]. Ber-Zuber, 2010, *Kiamat itu Indah*, Jakarta Hikmah (PT MizanPublika)
- [4]. Chodjim, Achmad, 2003, *Mistik dan Makrifat Sunan Kalijaga*, Jakarta: Penerbit Serambi
- [5]. Hafidhuddin, Didin, 2006, *Agar Layar Tetap Berkembang: Upaya Menyelamatkan Umat*, Jakarta : GemaInsani Press
- [6]. Noor, Syamsudin, 2009, *Misteri Surat Yasin*, Jakarta: Al Mawardi Prima
- [7]. Sambas, Syukriadi dan Tata Sukayat, 2003, *Quantum Doa*, Jakarta: Hikmah (PT MizanPublika)
- [8]. Shihab, M. Quraysh, 2002, "Membumikan" Al-Qur'an: Fungsi dan Peran Wahyu dalam Kehidupan Masyarakat, Bandung, Mizan Pustaka
- [9]. Shihab, 1994, *Lentera Al-Quran*, Bandung: PT Mizan Pustaka
- [10]. Shihab, Quraish, 2007, *Lentera Hati*, Bandung: Mizan Pustaka
- [11]. Sholikhin, Muhammad, 2010, *Ritual dan Tradisi Islam Jawa*, Yogyakarta: Penerbit Narasi
- [12]. Sholikhin, Muhammad, 2009 *Kanjeng Ratu Kidul Dalam Perspektif Islam Jawa*, Yogyakarta: Penerbit Narasi
- [13]. Solikhin, Muhammad, 2010 *Misteri Bulan Suro: Perspektif Islam Jawa*, Yogyakarta: Penerbit Narasi
- [14]. Siroj, Said Aqil, 2006, *Tasawuf sebagai kritik sosial*, Bandung: Mizan Pustaka
- [15]. Syam, Nur, 2005, *Islam Pesisir*, Yogyakarta: PT LKiSPelangi Aksara
- [16]. Supriyanto, 2010, *Tawakal Bukan Pasrah*, Jakarta: Qultum Media
- [17]. Suyono, 2007, *Dunia Mistik Orang Jawa*, Yogyakarta: PT LKiSPelangi Aksara
- [18]. Tasmara, Toto, *Membudayakan Etos Kerja Islami*, Jakarta: GemaInsani 2002
- [19]. Zawawi, Ali dan Saifullah Ma'shum, 1999, *Penjelasan al-Qur'an tentang Krisis Sosial, Ekonomi, dan Politik*, Jakarta: GemaInsani Press

Maman Lesmana. "Popular Arabic Terms in Indonesia: Forms and Its Meanings." IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS). vol. 23 no. 12, 2018, pp. 08-11.