

The Role of *Yabelale Lullabie* as Children's Character Building in South Sulawesi

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ABSTRACT

The continuity of human culture lies in the inheritance and formation of children's subjectivity from the earlier age. Therefore, in welcoming the arrival of the children as the future, various rituals carried out as a form of cultural conversation between the past (traditions from ancestors), the present (cultural actors), and the future (children). The oral tradition of the *Yabelale lullaby* in South Sulawesi reveals this cultural formation. This study aims to uncover the pattern passed by *Yabelale lullabies* as a form of children's character building in South Sulawesi. This research is an interpretative qualitative study that tries to understand the cultural tradition using Islamic aesthetic concepts developed by Abu Hamid Al Gazali. Based on his concept, it is found that as a traditional art, *Yabelale lullaby* aims to provide knowledge aesthetically to build children's moral virtues. Through the attainment of moral virtues and strong personalities, the children are prepared to wander and expand their intellectual universe as a way to know themselves and pursue knowledge of God. Its powerful reciter who sing lovingly, the content of the song, and the recital time powerfully and aesthetically open the heart of the children to embrace the messages and hopes of the future.

Keywords: *Aesthetics, Al Gazali, character building, lullaby, Yabelale*

1. INTRODUCTION

Mother singing to their babies is found in every tradition. Parents' longing for their children's best future is also easily found in many areas. Yet, the parents' vision of the future may be different based on their time, area, and tradition. As a result, lullabies seem to be different from one tradition to another tradition. An English mother sings a different song from an Indonesian mother to their sleepy children.

Time differences also shape the song prepared for children. Some songs praised by older parents are no longer recited by younger parents. Fadhillah (2018) shows that educated and urban people do not pay attention to traditional lullabies, yet they tend to recite *murattal* or musical instruments composed by famous musicians. Traditional lullabies are considered old fashion or no better than smartphone reciting the *murattal*.

Countless lullabies represented many different ethnic groups and some have been explored from many different dimensions. Many research found that lullabies related to the development of children character building such as

the ones conducted by) Muslim (2011); Yulianeta (2014). Almost all research found the existence of moral messages contained in the objected lullabies. Other research shows that lullabies from the perspective of musicology show that the sound in lullaby is easy to absorb by babies (Fridayani, 2015) and that the songs are used to provoke the Aboriginal infants' journey into their dream (Mackinlay, 1999).

Despite countless research conducted in Indonesia, other research found that singing traditional songs to infants is no longer a practiced culture. The development of modern science and the advancement of technology allow the replacement of people by technology. Furthermore, many women are also involved in the workforce and become more detached from the household core. As a result, they come home fatigued and rarely have time to perform primary duties such as cooking and cleaning. Technology replaces their role of singing to their kids. This situation is explained by Fadhillah (2018) in her field research Bugis Parents' Knowledge on *Yabelale*.

Yabelale is traditional lullaby of Bugis ethnic group in South Sulawesi. This traditional lullaby has been

reproduced into many different genre of popular song such as *dangdut*, jazz and pop music and describe them in numerous websites. Scholarly journals about the song refer it to an ancient traditional song (Dafirah, 2018) and its function in society (Muslim, 2011). However, none of them show to where *Yabelale* leads the Bugis people. It is true that it has value, but none of research describes how *Yabelale* relates to the religion and why singing before sleeping is such a good time to insert an message.

Even though most research find the value of lullabies in Indonesia, the research ends with a nostalgic statement that culture is no longer an everyday tradition in many urban areas. By focusing on the aesthetic dimension and religious dimension of *Yabelale*, this research shows that this tradition is not merely a song to let the babies sleep, but it is the combination of the reciter, the timing of the recitation, and the content of the lullabies make this song powerfully and aesthetically direct the children soul. In the case of *Yabelale lullaby*, the song conceals a pattern of life that the children may undertake. This pattern consists of knowing the self as the first learning to undertake in order to know the world. Knowing the self here means learning of self controlling. This is in accordance to the concept explained by Abu Hamid Al Gazali regarding ways people takes to broad his understanding of the world. Therefore the first part of the paper describes general ideas of character building, the second part consists of the explanation of the method, the third contains the analysis and the discussion of the research.

2. METHOD

The method applied in this research is qualitative study. The data of this research is taken from the material and the formal object. The material object is the object that become the field of research, while the formal object is a view point used to read and give a meaning to the text. The material object of this research is *Yabelale*, the Bugis lullaby, and the formal object is the concept way to happiness in taken the book *Kimyaa Assadah* written by AL Gazali as the formal object.

There are many different kinds of *Yabelale* such as *Cakkaruddu Atinrono*, *Paseng Riati*, and *Ininnawa*. Yet, when asking older people regarding the song, mostly would sing *Ininnawa*. *Ininnawa* contains order and hope of the parents to the kids as shown below.

Ininnawa sabbarae 2x Lolongeng gare Deceng/ Alla to sabbarae de.

the durably soul 2X way to virtue. Indeed an patient sol person.

Pitu taunna Sabbara 2x/ tengnginang kulolongeng/ Alla riyasengge

It has been seven years of endurance/ nothing I gain/of what is called virtue

Deceng Enreki Ri Bola/Tejjali te tappere/ Alla Banna mase-mase

Virtue come in to the house/ no mat or carpet/ but modesty

Mase-mase idi na ga 2X/ Ri suro mattarana/Alla mutea mabela.

Is that you modesty 2x / who is asked to nurture the children/ and you never go away.

Mabelampi kutiroki2X/Mujoppa ale-ale/Alla mutellu Sitinro

I saw you from the distance. You come alone in the presence/ but you are trinity

Tellu memengka si tinro2x/Nyawaku na tubukku /Alla passengerengede.

I am trinity/ My soul and my body and my memorable virtue.

Pasengereng pada bulu 2x/Adatta silappae /Alla ruttunge mannengngi Memory as high mountain2x/ Your piece of word may run all memories.

The data consists of primary data and secondary data. The primary data were collected by listening to many recorded *yabelale* and to the Bugis people's memories of the song as well as lyric of the song found in many sources. The object formal was applied to understand the meaning contained in the material object.

In his book, "The Alchemy of Happiness", Abu Ahmad Al-Gazali states that good character is a requirement for knowing the word of God, and the requirement of having a good character is to know oneself. Knowing oneself is the gate to knowledge. Knowing oneself means that human beings should know the composition of the self which is consisted of the body, the mind, and the soul. To know oneself, Al-Gazali shows the methods in his description as follow:

"The heart is a pond, and the five senses are the five cords of water that constantly flow into the well. To find out the contents of the well, the drainage should be stopped from flowing into the well to temporarily, and the rubbish carried by the stream shall be removed from the well. That is what it is like." (Al-Gazali, n.d. p. 3).

These methods are known in modern knowledge as detoxication which aims to cleanse the burden of the mind and soul, to feel more relaxed. The relaxation functions to focus and to consciously contemplate on an object. It supports the development of awareness and consciousness which allows human beings to see the impact of their attitude to themselves. In other words, the impact of trashes on the pond. Having a good character as the requirement to knowledge is very significant because it is a very important knowledge that may guide human beings in their life.

After obtaining a good character, a human being may have an ability to distinguish *husn* beauty from *jamal* beauty. In Islamic tradition, beauty is differentiated into two kinds. Namely *husn* and *jamal*. *Jamal* is universal and enriches spiritually in which wisdom lies. *Husn* is a material beauty that only enchants or amazes. People who have no knowledge will fall to *husn* beauty. While *jamal* can only be perceived by knowledge (Hadi, 2004).

Perceiving beauty has something to do with love. It is also a condition to feel good and relaxed. The beauty that is loved by God is the beauty that is associated with the goal of divinity. What is meant by the aim of divinity is morals. Love is associated with a hidden treasure, namely God's infinite knowledge.

The happiness that Al Gazalai means is morals and personality. Personality means that the morals that are seen in the deeds of worship and the level of knowledge. The highest happiness that can be obtained from works of art and high intellectuals is happiness that can bring us to know God with *haqq al yaqin*. Therefore, true beauty contains moral and religious dimensions.

The rating of beauty ranges from (1) sensual beauty (2) natural beauty (3) natural beauty of works of art and literature (4) spiritual beauty (5) divine beauty. Inner sight is essential for capturing beauty, knowledge and truth. Inner sight is more important than reason and it has a greater effect on faith. Here, it can be seen that Al Gazali believe that morality comes before knowledge of the world and the God. It is by knowing the self-first that lead an individual to know the God.

3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Yabelale is a lullaby recited in Bugis language practiced by Bugis ethnic group. This tradition is rarely found in the urban tradition but common in rural areas. This article argued that *Yabelale* is a beautiful form of art which beautifully recites an archetype to achieve the knowledge of the world and God that may able to build children's good character. There are three considerations that *precede yabelale* to have quality to channel to the character; namely the love of the singer, the content of the text, and the setting of the recitation. These three condition are elaborated below:

Firstly, *Yabelale* is the expression of beauty and love. As the song is sung by the mother, it is unquestionable that the song contains love energy. Islamic Sufism highly value the position of mothers for they have the capability to create live.

In many traditions, mothers are the symbol of life and love. *Prativi* and *Bhumi* are the symbols of mothers in Hinduist and Buddhist tradition (Atharva Veda, 2020). Similarly, in Islamic Sufism, mothers are the reflection of God in terms of love and compassion. It is symbolized by the presence of *rahim* (womb) in a women's body.

Rahim means love and compassion, and has the ability to create life namely to produce human beings as the continuance of human life on the earth. According to ibn Arabi, without love, there is no life. It is love that continues life (Murata, 1996).

Regarding *Yabelale*, a mother who chants the song means the song is already mediated with a mother's love, and love is related to beauty. It is love that relaxes the infant and brings them into sleep. Traditionally, mostly women sing the song.

Secondly, the text of *Yabelale* have aims to know the self. According to Al Gazali, knowing the self is the gate to the knowledge of God. Human beings cannot know God without understanding themselves. The self here means the human body, soul, and mind. In understanding the self, *Yabelale* first introduces the *innawa* or soul or *nafs* in Arabic. The *innawa* has various representations in Bugis tradition. It is sometimes described to an excellence person illustrated as *magello kininnawa* and bad person as *majaa kininnawa*. Therefore, it can be said that *innawa* is the energy that either can empower anger or virtue. It is energy felt by people which brings the birth of his identity and the attribute that constructs his character.

The song narrated certain characteristics namely *innawa sabbara* or a perseverance soul. This soul is the key to excellence as shown below:

Inninnawa sabbarae 2x Lolongeng gare Deceng/Alla to sabbarae de.

(the persevering soul 2X way to virtue. Indeed an patient soul person.

Perseverance is the key to virtue is in accordance with the account of the meeting between two prophets, Moses and Khaidir narrated in the Quran 18:60-82. Moses' failure to restrain himself from asking the prophet Khaidir ended his journey to pursue knowledge from him. The verses emphasize that the key to knowledge is perseverance, and knowledge is an excellence.

Furthermore, the song also narrates seven years of endurance. Seven symbolizes a long period of time. This means that perseverance does not have time. It goes beyond the time dimension. If one counts the time then virtue never comes. Being persistence is an endless way of life.

Pitu taunna Sabbara 2x/ tengnginang kulolongeng/ Alla riyasengge

It has been seven years of endurance/ nothing I gain/of what is called virtue

Finally, virtue arrives at a humble home which is considered an ideal home to nurture children. As shown below.

Deceng Enreki Ri Bola/Tejjali te tappere/ Alla Banna mase-mase

Virtue comes into the house/ no mat or carpet/ but modesty

From the verses, besides being persistence of nurturing children, modesty is also another significant element in building children's character. Bugis parents have a saying that people should learn living modesty, while they do not have to learn living lavishly. Living modesty builds children's characters to become hard-working and humble with a strong personality.

Mase-mase idi na ga 2X/Ri suro mattarana/Alla mutea mabela.

Is that you modesty 2x /who is asked to nurture the children/and you never go away.

The attainment of moral virtue allows the recognition of the self as narrated in the lullaby below;

Mabelampi kutiroki2X/Mujoppa ale-ale/Alla mutellu Sitinro

I saw you from the distance. You come alone in the presence/but you are trinity.

Here, the knowledge of the true self is revealed by the way of moral virtue. Al Gazaly shows in his first chapter that knowing the nafs means knowing the composition of the self. The self does not only consists of body, but it has nafs. In his book, Al Gazali describes kinds of nafs inside human body. Furthermore, Islamic Sufism unveils that the fundamental of knowing the self is the understanding that humans consist of three substances that operate within the body.

In this lullaby, trinity is defined as the body, the soul, and the mind. In Islamic Sufism, the body performs as a machine, the soul is the energy, and the mind is the creativity. This trinity is also the replication of the operation of the universe in that all living things have trinity. It has energy as the battery, the body as mechanic operation, and the mind as the application.

Tellu memengka si tinro2x/Nyawaku na tubukku /Alla passengerengede.

I am trinity/ My soul and my body and my memorable virtue.

Here, the body is understood as the microcosm of the universe. This means that understanding the pattern of the self is the window to know the pattern of the universe. The Sufi tradition calls this universal intelligence. Universal intelligence is different from the quality of smart.

In this situation, infants are introduced to signs of the universe and generally prepared to receive knowledge from the universe, an endless source of knowledge. The

mothers let them be nurtured and ordained by the universe after equipping them with moral virtue.

In the end, the song conveys that words are dangerous. People are taught to watch their tongue, for a piece of words has the ability to ruin all virtues built as shown below:

Pasengereng pada bulu 2x/Adatta silappae/Alla ruttunge mannengngi

Memory as high mountain2x/ Your piece of word may run all memories.

This passages shows that words are very important not only in human relations, but also to the relation to universe. All that has been built should be protected by good words because a peice of word may ruin everything.

From here, it can be understand that the text of song contain pattern in which address the attitude or character such perseverance and modesty because these attitude are the key to knowledge about the self. Once a person have a good control of his character, it is easy for him or her work persistently and control outside of him or herself.

Thirdly, the setting of *Yabelale* benefits the children in two ways. First, between the age of 0 to 6, the children's brain have the theta frequency. At that age, the children easily absorb information. Secondly, the theta frequency also occurs both to children and to older people when they are about to sleep. In this theta condition, people may program their children subconsciously. Subconsciousness determines people's behavior. (Lipton, 2019). Thus, *Yabelale* can be used to train good characters from early years.

The above analysis shows an additional finding to studies of Indonesian traditional lullabies. If Arum (2020) found Javanese values in *Lelo Ledhong*, Al-Afandi (2015) found religious values in Kaili lullabies, and Adeliyani (2015) revealed aesthetic value in Banjar lullabies, this study discovers that *Yabelale* let infants know about what and how to step into real life.

Lullabies does not introduce the infants to a certain intellectual and knowledge. Yet, the lullabies always narrates the significant of having good character before knowldge because good character is a key to knowledge. Without having the good character, a person's journey to knowldge has never ever arrived for the knowldge is the wisdom. Moreover, *Yabelale* narrates the importance of good character before knowledge. Without having good character, a person's journey to knowledge will not lead to wisdom.

This finding implies that the character of the children is under the parents responsibility. It is the character education that should be introduced first before learning counting and other languages. Parents, especially mothers, have responsibility to reach out for their children's soul which can be done aesthetically.

4. CONCLUSION

Yabelale has three qualities that may build children's characters, the presence and the love of the singing mothers powerfully brings the infant into serenity and calmness. This condition is described by Al Gazali as a calm pond from the stream. This calmness will allow mothers to access the inner self. The song contains a pattern of life for children to access a certain way of life. Furthermore, the frequency of the brain allows the infant to access their subconsciousness to easily program the infant's life as the parents wish. Figures and tables should be placed either at the top or

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