V. Braginsky

Some remarks on the structure of the Syair Perahuby Hamzah Fansuri

In: Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde 131 (1975), no: 4, Leiden, 407-426

This PDF-file was downloaded from <http://www.kitlv-journals.nl>

SOME REMARKS ON THE STRUCTURE OF THE "SYA^cIR PERAHU" BY HAMZAH FANSURI*

1. *Preliminary Remarks*

As is well-known, the Sufi concept of the spiritual path might be represented by various sets of symbols in Sufi lore. The most common of these symbols for the path in the classical Middle Eastern Sufi tradition are the erotic and vinous ones. It is an interesting and instructive point that in the Sumatran Sufi tradition the path is often represented by symbols which are associated with images of a ship and other images connected with seafaring, though these are not the most common symbols in Arabic and Persian Sufi literature.

We come across the earliest Sumatran Sufi use of this "boat symbolism" in some of the works of Hamzah Fansuri, the prominent Sumatran mystic and poet of the second half of the 16th and the first half of the 17th century. More or less explicit descriptions of a mystical voyage in a boat or ship are found in a great many of his poems,¹ while the ship as a symbol of the unity of *syariat*, *tarikāt* and *hakikat* occurs in his treatise *Syarāb al-Āsyikīn*.² Furthermore, the comparison of the human body to a ship is found in one of the mystical works of Syamsuddin of Pasai.³ And finally, this kind of symbolism is found in its most complete and elaborate form in the famous *Sya^cir Perahu*, which is also ascribed to Hamzah.⁴

* The present article is an English adaptation of an article entitled "K analizu struktury 'Poemy o lodke' Khamzakha Fansuri" which originally appeared in *Literatura Vostoka*, Moscow 1969, pp. 147-163.

¹ J. Doorenbos, *De Geschriften van Hamzah Pansoeri*, Leiden 1933, pp. 43-44, 49, 51-58 ff.

² Syed M. Naguib Al-Attas, *The Mysticism of Hamzah Fansuri*, Kuala Lumpur 1970, p. 300 (p. 419 English translation).

³ C. A. O. van Nieuwenhuyze, *Samsu'l-Din van Pasai*, Leiden 1945, p. 320.

⁴ The question of Hamzah Fansuri's authorship of the first version of the *Sya^cir Perahu* requires detailed investigation, which is beyond the aim and scope of the present article. It should be noted, however, that the absence of Hamzah

In Malay literary tradition there exist two considerably differing versions of the "poems of a boat". The one (which according to H. N. van der Tuuk should be ascribed to Hamzah Fansuri) is contained in the following MSS.:

1. The Leiden MS. Cod. Or. 3374,⁵ which, as H. N. van der Tuuk indicates, comprises fragments from the *Sya^cir Perahu* ("Fragmenten uit de Sja^cir Perahoe..."). This text (42 stanzas), which has become well-known since J. Doorenbos' edition thereof,⁶ will form the subject of our present discussion.
2. The London MS. SOAS 168218, containing 3 *sya^cirs*, viz. "Lamentation of a lover"; "Lamentation of a vagabond", which in some respects closely resembles *Sya^cir Dagang*⁷; and *Sya^cir Perahu* (NN9-13 with the original leaf pagination); as well as a collection of *pantuns*. The *Sya^cir Perahu* in this MS. numbers 74 stanzas, the last 2 of which are incomplete, and closes with the words "Tammattlah Sya^cir Perahu". Stanzas 1-39 of this MS. correspond closely with the text of Cod. Or. 3374. Aside from some *variae lectiones*, which do not significantly alter the meaning, the main differences between the two MSS. are: SOAS 168218 includes 4 stanzas (9, 19, 30, 31) which are lacking in Cod. Or. 3374; Cod. Or. 3374 includes 6 stanzas (21-26, containing the identification of parts of the boat in Sufi terms), which are lacking in SOAS 168218. The latter omission may in all probability be attributed to a copyist's error. Stanzas 40-74 of SOAS 168218 develop the theme contained in 35-42 of Cod. Or. 3374 (an interpretation of the "la ilāha illā 'llāhu" formula, to which an interpretation of the "Hu Allah" formula is added).
3. The Leiden MS. Cod. Or. 8754, constituting a notebook comprising 14 pages, of which the *Sya^cir Perahu* covers pp. 7-10. This MS., which

Fansuri's name in all of the copies of the poem mentioned below, as well as the absence of the *sya^cir* in the oldest and most reliably identified of Hamzah's MSS. (Leiden Cod. Or. 2016, and Djakarta Mal. 83), and the unusual rhyme structure of this *sya^cir* in comparison with Hamzah Fansuri's other works made this authorship somewhat dubious. (Details of Hamzah Fansuri's rhyme principles are given in: V. I. Braginsky, *Evolutsija Malajskogo Klassičeskogo Stiha* [Evolution of Classical Malay Verse], Moskva 1975, pp. 109-115, 161-167.) Since these facts are, of course, insufficient for us to arrive at a definitive solution of the problem, we deem it advisable meanwhile to stick to the traditional viewpoint.

⁵ For a description of the MSS. see H. H. Juynboll, *Catalogus van de Maleische en Sundaneesche Handschriften der Leidsche Universiteits-Bibliotheek*, Leiden 1899, p. 36.

⁶ J. Doorenbos, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-21.

⁷ J. Doorenbos, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-33.

forms part of the Damsté collection, represents a transliteration of an earlier lithographic edition of three *sya^cirs*: *Sya^cir Sunur* (by Syaikh Daud of Sunur), *Sya^cir Perahu* and *Sya^cir Mekkah* (also by Syaikh Daud). The text of the *Sya^cir Perahu* in Cod. Or. 8754 comprises 35 stanzas, as against the 42 of Cod. Or. 3374. Stanzas 1-18 of Cod. Or. 8754, despite numerous *variae lectiones*, correspond to stanzas 1-17 of Cod. Or. 3374 and 1-19 of SOAS 168218. Then the narration of the mystical voyage abruptly stops, and is followed by 11 stanzas describing the tortures of sinners in the grave. These stanzas find no exact parallel in Cod. Or. 3374 or SOAS 168218, although in their general purport they resemble stanzas 27-34 of the former and 23-29 of the latter. The closing stanzas of the text (30-35) correspond, with some *variae lectiones*, to 21-26 of Cod. Or. 3374.

4. The Leiden MS. Cod. Or. 1917,⁸ which contains an untitled poem (pp. 202-213) of 44 stanzas corresponding to the last part of the *Sya^cir Perahu* (stanzas 1-6 of Cod. Or. 1917 correspond to 35-38, 40 and 41 of Cod. Or. 3374; while stanzas 1-7, 9-18 of Cod. Or. 1917 correspond to 32-35, 37, 38, 40, 42, 43, 45-47, 53, 54, 56, 59, and 62 of SOAS 168218). The connection between this text and the first of the above versions of the *Sya^cir Perahu* is corroborated also by the resemblance in general purport between stanzas 38-44 of Cod. Or. 1917 and stanzas 27-34 of Cod. Or. 3374 and 23-29 of SOAS 168218 (all describing the tortures of sinners in the grave), and by the presence in Cod. Or. 1917 of lines with images connected with seafaring, viz.:

Ombaknya sahilan terlalu cabuh,	The waves at the coast (or, possibly, "sahilan" = "Silan", as in Cod. Or. 3374) are restless,
Pulaunya jauh tempat berlabuh.	The distant island is the anchorage.

which are comparable to:

Anginnya keras ombaknya cabuh,	The wind is strong, the waves are restless,
Pulaunya jauh tempat berlabuh.	The distant island is the anchorage.

in Cod. Or. 3374.

The second of the abovesaid versions of the "poems of a boat" is to be found in South Sumatran texts in *rèncong* script. We should mention in this connection a rather corrupt edition of a *rèncong* MS. of the poem by Van Hasselt.⁹ Two other, much better *rèncong* copies are

⁸ For a description of the MS. see H. H. Juynboll, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

⁹ A. L. van Hasselt, *De Talen en Letterkunde van Midden-Sumatra*, Leiden 1881, pp. 11-14.

preserved in MSS. kept in the India Office Library (MS. Malay A2) and in the Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies in London (MS. SOAS 41394). A synopsis of these two MSS. has been made by Dr. P. Voorhoeve (India Office, MS. Eur. C214).¹⁰

Common to both versions is the use of "boat symbolism" for the description of the mystical path, and the identification of parts of the boat with the aid of Sufi terms. As regards the differences between the two versions, these lie first and foremost in their compositional structure, in the different identifications of parts of the boat with Sufi terms, and, finally, in the presence in the South Sumatran poems of the Sufi concept of "Seven Grades" (Martabat Tujuh), which is not found in the first version.

The Javanese poem *Suluk Sukarsa*, attributed by R. M. Ng. Poerbatjaraka to the end of the 16th or beginning of the 17th century, and which is comparable in many respects to Malay "poems of a boat", is also worth mentioning here.¹¹

In the Middle Eastern Arabic and Persian Sufi traditions the use of images of a boat or ship and other nautical symbols can be traced back to the Qur'an (see, for instance, Qur'an 32: 23-31, etc.).¹² As a rule these were consciously used as *dhikric* symbols. As S. H. Nasr has pointed out, when one of the famous Persian Sufis Suhrawardi is speaking of a ship's journey in his "Story of the Occidental Exile", he is indicating "the main technique of Sufism which is the invocation (*dhikr*) of one of the names of God and which Sufi masters call the sacred barque that carries man across the ocean of the spiritual path to the shore of the spiritual world".¹³ This "boat symbolism" is used in a similar sense in one of Attar's *gazals*, which runs as follows, according to Arberry's translation:

¹⁰ I wish to express my deepest gratitude to Dr. P. Voorhoeve for providing the information on the various versions and MSS. of *Sya'ir Perahu* and making Cod. Or. 8754, Cod. Or. 1917, SOAS 168218, and India Office MS. Eur. C 214 available to me. My thanks are due also to Messrs. P. Sj. van Koningsveld and B. C. Bloomfield for supplying me with copies of Cod. Or. 1917, SOAS 168218, and India Office MS. Eur. C 214.

¹¹ R. M. Ng. Poerbatjaraka, T. Hadidjaja, *Kepustakaan Djawa*, Djakarta-Amsterdam 1962, pp. 100-104.

¹² For a list of Koranic verses containing references to ships and the sea, see: V. V. Bartold, *Koran i more* (The Qur'an and the Sea), in his *Sochinenia* (Selected works), vol. VI, Moscow 1965, pp. 544-548.

¹³ S. H. Nasr, Shihāb-al-Dīn Suhrawardi Maqtul, in M. M. Sharif (ed.), *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, vol. I, Wiesbaden 1963, pp. 381-382, note 30.

1.
When in the night of dryness
I call on Thee,
The vessel of my spirit
Goes riding free.

2.
And where the mighty ocean
Before me lies
A hundred salty torrents
Flood from mine eyes.

3.
I make for me a vessel
Out of Thy name
And into distant waters
I sail the same.

4.
And by that mighty motion
Upon each breath
My spirit everlasting
Far ventureth.¹⁴

At the same time, the symbolism of a boat as a medium between the ordinary and the transcendental world played an important role in the shamanistic rites of various peoples of the Malayo-Indonesian Archipelago, including the Malays themselves. As was convincingly demonstrated by Quaritch Wales through a comparison of the archaeological with the ethnological evidence, this "boat symbolism" in this region can be traced back to the pre-Hindu cultural substratum.¹⁵ M. Eliade in his *Shamanism* enumerates three kinds of shamanistic boat in the Archipelago.¹⁶ It is not our concern to analyse the differences between these in the framework of the present article. It will suffice for our purposes to state simply that such boat images were used in all three cases in connection with the magic journey to the supersensual world.

It seems quite probable that the shamanistic substratum has determined the choice of the "boat symbolism" — which is relatively rare in the vast arsenal of symbols for the path in the classical Middle Eastern Sufi tradition — by the Sufis of Sumatra. It is useful in this connection to recall Dr. B. Schrieke's contention that "An element from without . . . has been able to find its way in because it found in the culture a congenial substratum".¹⁷

In trying to explain the popularity of "poems of boats" in the Sumatran Sufi context from the influence of the shamanistic substratum, we mean neither to deny the importance of the mystical systems of the Hindu-Buddhist period as a preparatory medium for the perceptions of Sufism,¹⁸ nor to give a completely shamanistic connotation to the abovementioned symbols. Following R. O. Winstedt, we wish merely to

¹⁴ A. J. Arberry, *Classical Persian Literature*, London 1958, p. 135.

¹⁵ H. G. Quaritch Wales, *Prehistory and Religion in South-East Asia*, London 1957, pp. 83-104.

¹⁶ M. Eliade, *Shamanism*, London 1970, pp. 335-358.

¹⁷ B. Schrieke, *Indonesian Sociological Studies*, vol. I, The Hague-Bandung 1955, p. 232.

¹⁸ A. Johns, *Sufism as a Category in Indonesian Literature and History*, *JSEAH*, vol. 2, no. 2.

emphasize the role of shamanistic views and ideas with respect to the perception of Sufi doctrines in the Malay environment.¹⁹

2. *Aim and Approach*²⁰

In this study we are not going to analyse the mystical ideas which found expression in the *Sya'ir Perahu* (Doorenbos' edition) at any length. For a more profound and comprehensive exposition of Hamzah Fansuri's mystical teachings we refer the reader to the newly published book by Muhammad Naguib Al-Attas, *The Mysticism of Hamzah Fansuri*, Kuala Lumpur, 1970. Ours is a different purpose. We shall try to reveal the system of the artistic (literary) devices used to turn the poem into an efficient instrument for the conveyance of Sufi ideas. In other words, we shall approach our subject from the perspective of literary criticism rather than that of the study of religion and mysticism, though the latter will be taken into consideration as well.

Any literary work should be regarded not as a mere, fortuitous agglomeration of devices, but as representing a certain hierarchical system of their oppositions. Y. M. Lotman says about this: "The peculiarity of structural study is in the following: it implies not a study of separate elements in their isolation or mechanical combination but a determination of interrelation of the elements and their significance within the structural whole".²¹

Naturally, not all elements are of equal importance in this interrelation. This has already been pointed out by Y. Tynianov, who wrote:

¹⁹ See the following of his works: *The Malay Magician, being Shaman, Saiva and Sufi*, London 1951; and *The Cosmogony of the Malay Magician*, in *Bingkisan Budi*, Leiden 1950. It is an interesting point that sometimes Sufi terminology is used in shamanistic texts; see, for example, J. D. Gimlette, *Malay Poisons and Charm Cures*, London 1929, pp. 275-280.

²⁰ Naturally the author of this article is perfectly aware that the results of an investigation based on only a single copy of the poem instead of a critical edition, are perhaps open to doubt, all the more so since the MS. Cod. Or. 3374 comprises no more than mere fragments of the *Sya'ir Perahu*. However, a comparison of Cod. Or. 3374 with Cod. Or. 8754, and particularly with SOAS 168218, shows that Cod. Or. 3374 contains all the principal compositional elements of the *Sya'ir Perahu*, while it is precisely these that are the subject of our analysis in section 3 of this article. As regards section 4, which deals mainly with stanzas 1-21 of Cod. Or. 3374, a comparison of these stanzas with the corresponding stanzas of the other two MSS. demonstrates that the differences between them are not so substantial as to be likely to significantly affect the conclusions drawn here after publication of a critical text edition, which is at present being prepared by the author.

²¹ Y. M. Lotman, *Lekcii po struktural'noy poetike* (Lectures on structural poetics), Tartu 1964, pp. 5, 6.

"No artistic fact exists without the sensation of deformation of all the various factors by the constructive factor".²² The poem under discussion here represents a sermon, this being in fact its main characteristic. The opening stanza of the poem bears this out. In the sermon, the main idea or content nucleus and the devices adopted for its propagation predominate over all the other elements and determine the structure of the entire composition.

What is the content nucleus of the poem under discussion? The theme of a gnostic striving after gnosis of God. He starts on a mystical journey (an allegory for the way of knowledge). The instrument of cognition is the knowledge of the nature of God through ecstasy. As a result of the journey, the gnostic, after passing through a number of stages of perfection, in the end identifies himself with God. (The phrase "identification with God" should not in this context be understood in the sense of presumptuous self-deification on the part of the gnostic. With some degree of simplification one may say that the crux of the matter lies in the renunciation of one's individual, outer self on the mystical path of gnosis, in the annihilation of this outer self in one's ecstatic love for God, and thus in the acquisition of knowledge of the identity of one's inner self (the microcosm) with the Absolute (the macrocosm, God). So the main idea of the poem is identification with God in a state of ecstasy.

As a corollary of the abovesaid idea, we may surmise that:

1. the poem will contain certain devices for the adequate expression of the idea of identification of the gnostic with God, and certain devices for the adequate expression of the ecstatic state of the gnostic;
2. the combination of the two kinds of devices will provide a formal core which is determined by the content nucleus and which in its turn will determine and subordinate the other artistic devices.

For the sake of simplicity, we shall divide these devices into two major groups, viz: external structure, or the level of the general composition of the poem; and internal structure, or all the levels that are subordinate to the compositional one.

3. *The External Structure of the Poem*

In the first part of the poem, which may be tentatively considered as coinciding with stanzas 1-21, we have the dynamically developing subject of a mystical journey, viz.:

²² Y. Tynianov, *Problema stihotvornogo jazyka* (Problems of poetic language), *Academia*, 1924, p. 10.

1.
Inilah gerangan suatu madah,
mengarangkan sya'ir terlalu indah,
membetuli jalan tempat berpindah,
di sanalah iktikad diperbetuli sudah.
- Are not these the most fitting phrases
To make up an exquisite *syā'ir*?
Perfecting the path to the point of
Where the faith is perfect. [transition]
2.
Wahai muda kenali dirimu,
ialah perahu tamsil tubuhmu,
tiadalah berapa lama hidupmu,
ke akhirat jua kekal diammu.
- Oh youth, know thyself!
Like a boat is thy body,
And but short thy life.
In the afterworld is thine eternal abode.
3.
Hai muda, arif budiman,
hasilkan kemudi dengan pedoman,
alat perahumu jua kerjakan,
itulah jalan membetuli insan.
- Oh, wise and knowing youth!
Avail thyself of a rudder and compass.
Equip thy boat:
Such is 'the way of perfection for man.
-
19.
Ingati sungguh siang dan malam,
lautnya deras bertambah dalam,
anginpun keras ombaknya rencam,
ingati perahu jangan tenggelam.
- Be truly careful day and night,
The raging seas grow ever deeper,
The wind is strong, the waves are restless,
Take care lest the boat sink.
-
21.
Sampailah Ahad dengan masanya,
datanglah angin dengan paksanya,
berlayar perahu sidang budimannya,
berlayar itu dengan kelengkapannya.
- The time for Unity has come,
A fair wind has blown,
The company of the wise are sailing the
They are sailing fully equipped. [boat,

From the point of view of the content, this represents the definition of the aim of the gnostic stepping onto the mystical path. In the second part of the poem (stanzas 22-39) this dynamic moment gives place to the statical. Here not the journey but the mystical knowledge as such is described, and obviously, now that the aim is defined, the only thing that is left to do is to determine the ways of attaining it. This is described as follows:

22.
Wujud Allah nama perahunya,
ilmu Allah akan kurungnya,²³
iman Allah nama kemudinya,
yakin akan Allah nama pawangnya.
- "Being of God" is the name of the boat,
"Knowledge of God" the name of its hold;
"Faith in God" is the name of its rudder,
"Certainty of God" the name of its pilot.
-

²³ Sic in Cod. Or. 8754.

30.

Tuntuti ilmu jangan kepalang
di dalam kubur terbaring seorang,
Munkar wa Nakir ke sana datang,
menanyakan jikalau ada engkau
sembahyang.

Be steadfast in the search for knowledge;
In the grave thou art alone
Here Munkar and Nakir come to visit
thee,
Asking "Hast thou prayed?"

32.

Munkar wa Nakir bukan kepalang,
suaranya merdu bertambah garang,

tongkatnya besar terlalu panjang,
cabuknya banyak tiada terbilang.

Munkar and Nakir are inexorable.
Their voices, though sweet, grow ever
fiercer,
Their huge staffs are immensely long,
Their many whips innumerable.

33.

Kenal dirimu, hai anak Adam,
tatkala di dunia terangnya alam,

sekarang di kubur tempatmu kelim,

tiadalah berbeda siang dan malam.

Know thyself, oh son of Adam,
As long as thou art in this world, it is
filled with light;
Once in thy grave, thou art surrounded
by darkness,
And there is no difference between night
and day.

The static and dynamic parts of the poem are connected by stanza 26:

Wallahu a'lam nama rantaunya,
iradat Allah nama bandarnya,
kudrat Allah nama labuhannya,
surga jannat an-na'im nama negerinya.

"But God knows best" is the name of
the coast,
"God's will" the name of the harbour;
"God's omnipotence" is the name of the
roadstead,
"Blissful Paradise" the name of the land.

The ambivalent character of this stanza is obvious, for here we find the static element that is typical for the second part of the poem and at the same time the element of motion typifying the first part. The idea of motion is expressed indirectly. It is conveyed through certain visual images of landmarks picked out by the seafarer: first we see a distant coast, then a port, and finally the very country of our gnostic's destination. The author is, as it were, saying to the reader, who is startled by the sudden break in the uncompleted motion: "Our aim is fixed, now let us pass on to the ways of its practical realization". The next stanza, 27, is also of a demarcational character:

Karangan ini suatu madah
Mengarangkan sya'ir tempat berpindah

di dalam dunia janganlah tam'ah
di dalam kubur berkhawatir sudah.

These verses form a composition,
Making up a poem of this place of
transition.
Be not covetous in this world.
Once in thy grave thou art alone.

This character is stressed by the fact that the stanza is to a great extent repetitive of the first stanza. The intention of this demarcation is: "Up to now we have spoken in the metaphorical language of the parable. Now that certain parts of the boat have found their analogy in certain mystical terms, it is high time to give an exposition of the Sufi doctrine in order to help the gnostic to acquire a more profound knowledge."

At last, in the third and final part of the poem, the gnostic identifies himself with God:

40.

Lā ilāha illā 'llāhu itu kesudahan kata,	"There is no God but God" is the
tauhid ma'rifat semata-mata,	ultimate word,
hapuskan hendak sekalian perkara,	The pure gnosis of unity.
hamba dan Tuhan tiada berbeda.	Give up desire and all things material.
	The Master and his slave are one.

41.

Lā ilāha illā 'llāhu itu tempat mengintai,	"There is no God but God" is the focus
medan yang kadim tempat berdamai,	of meditation,
wujud Allah terlalu bitai [Cod. Or. 1917 bisai, hence the translation],	The eternal arena where peace is sought.
siang dan malam jangan bercerai.	The Being of God is of overwhelming beauty.
	Never (lit.: day or night) divorce thyself from It.

42.

Lā ilāha illā 'llāhu itu tempat	"There is no God but God" is the focus
musyahadah,	of contemplation,
menyatakan tauhid jangan berubah,	Proclaim the Oneness unceasingly.
sempurnalah jalan iman yang mudah	Though the easy way of religion be
	flawless,
pertemuan Tuhan terlalu susah.	Union with God remains difficult (to attain).

The slave, or gnostic, and Allah here have become undifferentiated and identical. The dynamic and the statical parts of the poem are linked together by the stepped comparison, or, to be more precise, the progressive assimilation. This device runs through the entire poem as a function of the content nucleus, and is responsible for this specific form of its overall structure, in preference to any other. This means that it forms a constituent part of the formal core of the poem. Each consecutive upward step brings the gnostic closer to universal knowledge, and forms the point of departure for the subsequent development of the poem. Thus such assimilations simply provide the necessary impulses for each successive part, marking the progressive stages of: lack of knowledge — knowledge — identification with God. The poem is

divided into three stages. In the first one, the gnostic compares himself to a boat. Naturally, in this figurative representation the ocean becomes the symbol of transient, treacherous temporal life, while the longed-for island represents God. Then, at the next stage (22-26), the boat is compared to *wujud Allah* (God's Being). The gnostic realizes that its rudder is *iman Allah* (faith in God), its anchor is *tauhid* (the experience of unity with God), and so on. Finally, in the third phase of assimilation, the gnostic identifies himself with God. A similarly stepped structure can be found in many other Sufi works, such as, for example, an extract from *Masnawi-i Ma'nawi* by Jalaluddin Rumi.²⁴ The basis underlying the stepped structure is something like a syllogism, viz.: if the gnostic is a boat and the boat is *wujud Allah* (Being of God), then the being of the gnostic and Being of God are one and the same, the gnostic thus identifying himself with God in the sense specified above. The mechanisms of the creation of such quasi-syllogisms have been clearly revealed by R. O. Winstedt, who says: "The process of thought is clear. The archangels are four; the first Caliphs were four; the elements out of which the body is composed are four; the limbs of the body are four. Therefore man and the Archangels are one. Adam, Muhammad and Allah can each be spelt in Arabic with four letters. Therefore Allah and man are identical."²⁵

So although we have hereby defined the basic stages of the external structure of the poem, the emotional, psychological effect of the poem as a result of this particular structure remains beyond the scope of our study. We have mentioned above that this poem represents a sermon. In this connection it seems useful to analyse the description of a sermon in Antoine de Saint Exupéry's novel *Courrier Sud* (Southern Mail), as contained in the following extracts:

1. "Il n'employait plus que des mots qui entraînaient un cortège de réminiscences, qui duraient. Il lui semblait exercer sur la foule une pesée lente, allonger peu à peu son élan comme la foulée du coureur."
2. "Puis les mots lui vinrent et il parla. Il parlait avec une sûreté étonnante. Il avait l'allégresse du débardeur qui sent sa force."

²⁴ R. A. Nicholson, *Masnawi-i Ma'nawi*; Persian text with English translation, GMS, vol. IV, Leiden 1928, *bait* NN 3647-3649. The difference between this extract and the *Sya'ir Perahu* is provided by the subject matter and not the form, as Rumi describes an ascent up the steps of Nature, and Hamzah up the steps of knowledge.

²⁵ R. O. Winstedt, *The Malay Magician* . . . , p. 75.

This is then followed in the novel by the text of the sermon proper. And finally:

3. "Le prêtre se tut. Épuisé il se retourna vers l'autel. . . . Il s'identifiait sans le savoir avec le Christ."²⁶

Now the psychological impact of the first part of the *Sya'ir Perahu*, full as it is of the images of the sea and boats which are so dear to the heart of the Malay, as well as of God in the form of a longed-for island, becomes clearer. The first part releases in the reader "un cortège de réminiscences", and at the same time prepares him for further perception. The second and third parts of the sermon by Saint Exupéry's preacher similarly correspond with the second and third parts of the poem by Hamzah, the only difference being that the preacher unconsciously identifies himself with Christ, while Hamzah quite consciously identifies himself with God. We may trace certain elements of the first part of the poem to certain popular Malay texts. So we may compare it with a Selangor incantation, which similarly describes a ship and its departure.²⁷ There is a description in both of a departure from a narrow river estuary, the swift movement of a ship, the tossing of the sea, and a rippling trail behind the ship, a dangerous rippling, betokening the presence of stones and shallows. The exhortations for vigilance and the orders to the crew (gnostic) are also similar:

<i>Incantation</i>	<i>Sya'ir Perahu</i>
1. Janganlah leka, janganlah lalai . . . jangan lengah ditelok rantau . . .	1. Perteguh jua alat perahumu muaranya sempit tempatmu lalu . . . ingati perahu jangan tenggelam . . .
2. Baiklah lekas panglima lenggang laut	2. Supaya laju perahumu itu
3. Main ombak, main gelombang, Main gelombang meniti riak . . .	3. Riaknya rencam, ombaknya karang . . . riaknya rencam, ombaknya besar . . . angin pun keras, ombaknya rencam . . .
4. Jerbatu bongkarlah sauh, jertinggi juaklah layar, jermudi putar kemudi, anak dayong pautlah dayong . . .	4. Perteguh jua alat perahmu . . . dayung pengayuh taruh disitu . . . angkatlah pula sauh dan layar . . . pertetaplah kemudi jangan terkejut . . .

²⁶ A. de Saint Exupéry, *Courrier Sud*, Librairie Gallimard, Éditions de la Nouvelle Revue Française, 10e édition, Paris, n.d., pp. 137-138, 142.

²⁷ W. W. Skeat, *Malay Magic* (2nd ed.), New York 1966, p. 643.

English translations

1.
Be not careless or slothful,
Linger not by inlet or river-reach...	1.
Make your rigging fast.
The estuary where you must pass is
narrow,
Take care your boat doesn't sink.
2.
It were well to hasten, O Penglima
Lenggang Laut...	2.
Let your boat sail fast...
3.
Sporting among the surge and breakers,
Sporting among the surge and fol-
lowing the wave-ridges...	3.
The ripples are wild, the waves are
steep...
The ripples are wild, the waves are big...
The wind is strong, the waves are wild...
4.
Master of the Anchor, heave up the
anchor;
Master of the Foretop, spread the sails;
Master of the Helm, turn the helm;
Oarsmen, bend your oars...	4.
Fasten your rigging...
Pull in your oars...
Weigh your anchor and hoist your sail...
Steady your rudder, be not afraid.

(W. W. Skeat, *Malay Magic*, New York 1966, p. 439.)

It is hardly likely that such similarity is attributable simply to borrowing from a specific folk story. More probably the departure of a ship is traditionally connected with this type of description in Malaysia. Hamzah uses it with the aim of arousing in his readers "un cortège de réminiscences". In the same incantation we find a number of specialist terms for the various parts of the ship, such as, for example:

Tiangnya nama Raja Mendela,
temberangnya nama Perak belepeh,	Whose Mast is named "Prince Mendela",
Whose Shrouds are named "The Shrouds
that are silvered",
dayongnya nama Jari lipan...	Whose Oars are named "The Feet of the
Centipede"...
tepi bernama Pagar tenggalong,
kemudi bernama lebeh bergantung,	Whose side is named "Civet-cat Fencing",
Whose Rudder is named "The Pendulous
Bees'-nest",
dandan bernama Sawa mengampej.	Whose Galleries ²⁸ are named "Strugg-
ling Pythons".

(W. W. Skeat, *Malay Magic*, New York 1966, p. 439.)

Perhaps such terms for ships' parts suggested to Hamzah the idea of connecting them with Sufi terminology. It is interesting to note that

²⁸ But "dandan" here means "dandanan sauh", i.e., "anchor chain"; hence the comparison with a python (singular).

this connection in many cases (14 out of 20) is effected through association by assonance and alliteration, such as, for example: *tauhid* (unity) - *sauh* (anchor); *salat akan nabi* (prayer to the prophets) - *tali bubutannya*; *iman* (faith) - *kemudi* (rudder), etc.

We might, on closer study, discover a more fundamental connection still between the "Poem of the Boat" and incantations of the above-mentioned type. The ship (*lancang*) is regarded in this incantation as the embodiment of the spirit invoked. The ship's destination is also of importance here. This latter is the sea of Pauh Janggi, a name used in Malay mythology to denote the "World Tree" planted in the centre of the Ocean; an enormous crab dwells in the cavity beneath its roots. Possibly, the ideas of the abovesaid incantation have been given a Sufi reinterpretation in the "Poem of the Boat". The ship, the embodiment of the spirit, is reminiscent of the boat with which the gnostic is identified. Moreover, the poem emphasizes the boundlessness of the seas of Silan and Kulzum, these being substitutes for the Great Ocean of Malay mythology. And the mythical "World Tree" planted in the centre of this ocean is replaced by the image of the longed-for island as a symbol of God. This hypothesis becomes all the more tenable when we take into account the context of the folk beliefs which influenced Sufi ideology in Malaysia.

4. *The Internal Structure of the Poem*

Even at the most superficial glance at the poem, we cannot help noticing the large number of lines which are regularly repeated, such as, for example:

- Perteguh jua alat perahumu (stanza 4)
- Perteguh jua alat perahumu (stanza 6)
- Di sanalah perahu rusak dan karam (stanza 7)
- Di sanalah perahu karam dan rusak (stanza 14), etc.

There are some 13 such pairs, and sometimes trios, of lines which are repeated with minimal variations, such as the replacement of a word or its substitution by a synonym. Moreover, in nine cases the position of the repeated line in the stanza does not alter.

What is the reason for the use of such repetition? Quite likely this feature is traceable to popular literature. The repetition of lines in pairs may go back in this form to Malay popular poetry, such as *pantun berkait*. If we take into consideration R. O. Winsted's remark that the mystical poetry of Hamzah is closely connected with the *pantun* tra-

dition,²⁹ then this specific form requires our special attention. It is interesting to note in this connection that there are some *pantuns* which contain fairly close parallels with the Sya^cir Perahu. For example:

Lancang kuning belayar malam, Haluan dipaut menuju kuala;	A yellow ship is sailing in the night; Its bows are turned towards the river- mouth;
Panjangkan runding luar dan dalam, Jangan diturut nafsu menyala.	Carefully weigh all things external and internal, Follow not your raging passions.
Lancang melorot arah kuala, Harus deras banyak berjeram; Jangan diturut nafsu menyala, Akhirnya nahas karam tenggelam.	The ship is sailing towards the river- mouth, The current is swift, the rapids are mani- fold; Follow not your raging passions, [If you do] in the end disaster will over- take you and you will sink.
Air deras sungai berjeram, Pandu yang pandai cari dahulu; Kalau'dah nahas karam tenggelam, Jiwa tergadai namapun malu.	The current is swift, the river full of rapids, First you should find a skilful pilot; If disaster overtakes you and you should sink, It will mean you have pawned your soul and disgraced your name.
Pandu pandai orang di hulu, Lancang meloncor di air deras; Jiwa tergadai namapun malu, Sepanjang umur hidup terkandas.	A skilful pilot from the upper reaches; The ship is gliding rapidly across the swift waters. You would pawn your soul, disgrace your name, And be stranded to the end of your days.
Hemat-hematlah belayar malam, Harus deras karangnya tajam; Carilah pandu malim yang faham, Supaya lancang jangan tenggelam. ³⁰	Be careful when sailing at night; The current is swift, the reefs are sharp; Seek out a wise and experienced pilot, So your ship does not sink.

²⁹ R. O. Winstedt, *A History of Classical Malay Literature*, Singapore 1961, p. 155.

³⁰ Za'ba, *Kalong Bunga*, buku I, Kuala Lumpur 1964, pp. 88-90. The following *pantun* is also interesting in this respect. Cf. also No. 1455 in *Pantoen Melajoe*, Batavia 1937:

Baik ² berlayar malam, Arus deras karangnya tajam; Cari ² mu ^c alim yang paham, Di situ banyak kapal tenggelam.	Beware when sailing at night, The current is strong, the reefs are sharp; Seek out a wise tutor, Here many a ship has sunk.
---	--

Now, turning back to the *pantun berkait*, one should observe that, though normally each stanza repeats the second and fourth lines of the preceding one, now in the position of the first and the third, and so on, there is a variation on the repetition of lines in this genre. For example (the lines with complete or incomplete repetition are printed in italics):

Kalau tuan pergi ke Tanjung,
Kirim sahaya se'lai baju;
Kalau tuan menjadi burung,
Sahaya menjadi ranting kayu.

If you should go to Tanjung,
Send me a jacket;
If you should turn into a bird,
I shall turn into a bough.

Kalau tuan pergi ke Tanjung,
Belikan sahaya pisau lipat;
Kalau tuan menjadi burung,
Sahaya menjadi benang pengikat.

If you should go to Tanjung,
Buy me a clasp-knife;
If you should become a bird,
I shall turn into a snare.

Kalau tuan pergi kelaut,
Pesan sahaya ketam jantan;
Kalau tuan menjadi pulut,
Sahaya menjadi kepala santan.

If you should go to the sea,
Send me a he-crab;
If you should turn into glutinous rice,
I shall turn into coconut cream

Kalau tuan pergi kelaut,
Carilah sahaya ketam betina;
Kalau tuan menjadi rambut,
Sahaya menjadi bunga cina.³¹

If you should go to the sea,
Find me a she-crab;
If you should turn into hair,
I shall turn into a flower to put in it.

Here both the lines with complete and those with incomplete repetition retain the same position in the stanza. The structure of the lines with incomplete repetition does not alter; what does change is the final rhymed word only. The lines with complete repetition come mostly in pairs, and trios.

A similar technique of repetition of whole lines is found in *Sya'ir Perahu*. This enables us to trace it back to the repetitions of the type of the abovementioned variant of the *pantun berkait*.

The repetitions in the *pantun berkait* serve two functions, viz.: intensification and ornamentation. The functions of such repetitions in our poem are the same, the former being the more important. The aim of the author apparently is to stress the unity, integrity and coherence of the work. But as this poem represents a sermon, it is useful to pay special attention to the content function of the repeated lines. In this connection we would list three principal types of statement, viz.

³¹ S. T. Alisjahbana, *Puisi Lama*, Djakarta 1954, pp. 25-26 (the present text is taken from *Pantun Melayu* by R. J. Wilkinson and R. O. Winstedt). The similarity in composition of the repeated lines may be traceable to the abovementioned incantations from Selangor; see W. W. Skeat, *Some Records of Malay Magic*, *JSBRAS*, No. 31, p. 17.

1. Riaknya rencam, ombaknya karang.
2. Perteguh jua alat perahumu.
or: Perbetuli pedoman jangan berubah.
3. Selamat engkau kepulau itu.

The author here is warning about the dangers of the journey, talking about the necessity of careful preparation and urging the traveller on. The numerous cases of repetition of non-changing lines emphasize these themes. The repetitions thus fulfil an intensifying function. But this function is not fulfilled by the repetition of lines only — an important part is played also by the repetition of basic words in the first part of the poem (stanzas 6-19). For example, in an enumeration of the dangers of the forthcoming journey, the name of each of these is repeated, as follows:

1. *ombak* (wave) - 7 times;
2. *angin* (wind) - 4 times;
3. *hiu, paus* (shark, whale) - 4 times;
4. *laut* (sea) - 4 times.

Or the adjectives qualifying these words are repeated, as follows:

1. *banyak* (many) - 5 times
2. *rencam* (stirring) - 2 times
3. *keras* (strong) - 3 times.

Thus there are in this extract, numbering about 200 words, 16 words constituting 22 %, instead of the 8 % to be expected if none of these 16 words were repeated. An unusually large number of repeated words runs through the entire poem, though not always as obviously as in the first part. Certain set combinations of words occur in a great many stanzas; for example, "*siang dan malam*" (day and night) is repeated in stanzas 18, 19, 33, 38 and 41, and the formula "*Lā ilāha illā 'llāhu*" in stanzas 11, 13, 24, 35-42.

Furthermore, the repetitions occurring under the influence of *pantun berkait* and featuring throughout the poem determine the syntactical structure of the non-repeated lines. Where we do not find repetition of the entire line in the proper sense of the word, we often find its echo, which is achieved by formal parallelism, i.e. the repetition of the syntactical structure of the lines concerned.

What is the emotional effect of repetition in the poem?

If we compare the repetitions in the "Poem of the Boat" with repetitions in works of a similar type in which the cognition of God is accompanied by strong emotional tension, we will arrive at the conclusion that the technique of repetition in our poem is aimed at the creation of an inner rhythm of the poem, a rhythm that is beyond the usual rhythm of *syāʿir*. Repetitions of various kinds, from the repetition of whole lines to that of the syntactical structure of lines, crop up again and again and, like the continual sounds of a drum, stir up the reader and drive him into a state of ecstasy, which reaches its peak after the nine-times repeated formula: *Lā ilāha illā ʾllāhu*. It is just like the mounting tension of the frenzy of the dervish.³²

The analysis of the sound level of the poem also prompts the idea that the inner structure of the poem reflects an atmosphere of *dhikr*. As it is impossible to discuss the whole of the complicated euphonic system of the "Poem of the Boat" in the scope of a short article, we shall touch upon but one aspect of this system.

We have made a statistical comparison of the frequencies of the occurrence of individual sounds in the poem (within the boundaries of the lines) with their frequencies as computed from a large sample that is euphonicly unorganized. For this purpose, the method of study suggested by G. Altmann was used.³³ This method allows us to distinguish sound repetitions which represent a poetic device (as an expression of the poet's conscious intention) from those which occur by chance, as a result of the limited number of sounds of any language, and which are therefore representative of phenomena that are characteristic for the structure of the language the literary work is written in as a whole, rather than for the poetics of the work.

The results of the analysis brought us to the conclusion that sixty per cent of the euphony of the poem, according to Altmann's method, is accounted for by only two sounds: *l* and *h*. Any other pair of sounds which might be regarded as representing a poetic device comes a long way after this particular one. The sounds *l* and *h* therefore form the main phonetic core of the poem, which is dominant throughout the entire text. It is especially prominent at the beginning (stanzas 2-17)

³² Cf. the *dhikric* character of the "boat symbolism" in the Middle Eastern Sufi tradition mentioned above.

³³ G. Altmann, Binomial Index of Euphony for Indonesian Poetry, in *Asian and African Studies*, vol. II, Bratislava 1966.

and the end (stanzas 34-41). In the majority of cases *l* and *h* are used in combination with the vowel *a*, thus forming the sound combinations *ah*, *al*, *ha* and *la*. Examining the rhyme structure of the poem, easily the most prevalent rhymes are seen to be *ah* (6 stanzas), *uh* (4 stanzas) and *lam* (4 stanzas), in other words, rhymes which also contain the sounds *l* and *h*, the phonic effect of which is reinforced in this case by their emphatic position.

In our view, the sounds *l* and *h* are so frequently repeated in our poem because they are elements of the name of Allah and of the *syahadat* formula (*lā ilāha illā 'llāhu*) - the key words of the *Sya^cir Perahu*. In stanzas 1-9 these sounds as it were prepare the way for the introduction of the *syahadat* formula by presenting it on the phonic level first, while after the introduction of the formula (stanza 10) and the name of Allah (stanza 21) the entire poem finally becomes attuned to this sound combination.³⁴

As R. O. Winstedt mentions, a Malay mystic would fall into a trance after uttering the name of Allah 5000 times, in which state he had visions of saints and angels instructing him in mystical knowledge.³⁵ The name of Allah and the *syahadat* formula, even in places where they are not mentioned explicitly on the lexical level, are present implicitly on the sound level in the "Poem of the Boat". The specific organization of the latter, as described above, is a matter of high importance. Due to this organization, God's name in the poem is present, as it were, in words which have nothing to do with it in ordinary daily speech.

The repetition of whole lines, isolated words and phonemes thus is the second constituent of the formal core. Progressive assimilation determines the external structure of the poem, while the system of repetition determines its internal structure. That is the reason why the number of basic words is limited, and as the epithets applied are furthermore of an elementary kind — e.g., the sea is blue, the ripples are restless — the vocabulary of the poem is also limited. The repetition of rhymes is an outcome of the tendency to preserve lines unchanged (there are only 15 different rhymes for 42 stanzas, while, moreover, the rhyming scheme of each

³⁴ On the significance of conceptual keywords for the sound level of the structure of literary works see: F. de Saussure, *Les Anagrammes de Ferdinand de Saussure*, in *Mercure de France*, No. II, 1964; R. Jakobson, *Selected Writings*, vol. IV, The Hague 1966, pp. 606-608, 680-686; V. N. Toporov, *K analizu nekotorykh poeticheskikh tekstov* (Towards an analysis of several poetic texts), in *Poetics, Poetyka*, vol. II, Warszawa 1966, p. 76.

³⁵ R. O. Winstedt, *The Malay Magician*..., p. 73.

quatrain follows the pattern aaaa, bbbb, etc.). The numerous repetitions of rhymes are responsible for the rich sound structure of the poem and turn it into a homogeneous whole. Finally, these numerous repetitions, the obviously conscious effort to retain these, and the undesirability of using the same rhymes all through, appeared to constitute the reasons for substituting certain rhymed words by synonyms. The most frequent syntactical pattern of the line, especially in the first part of the poem, is: noun + attribute + noun + attribute, which is in accordance with the normal rules governing word order in the Malay language; an example is: "*anginnya keras ombaknya cabuh*" (stanza 10). Whenever the rhyme is changed, the attribute changes accordingly. We may give an instance of such transformation on the basis of the same example, in which the line now becomes: "*anginpun keras ombaknya rencam*" (stanza 19). This is how the author of the poem has enriched its vocabulary and added new colours and shades to his descriptions.

For an exhaustive structural analysis of the "Poem of the Boat" a more detailed and profound study of the poem on all its levels is called for, as well as, possibly, detailed research into its extra-textual relations. We have confined ourselves to the analysis of the compositional level, aiming thereby to discover the principles governing the artistic description of the process of the gnostic's identification with God, and have deliberately refrained from making a separate study of each level beyond the compositional one. Our purpose was to point out, if only roughly, the reflection of the ecstatic state of the gnostic in the poetic texture of this poem. As far as the extra-textual relations of the *Sya'ir Perahu* are concerned, we have attempted to reveal the principal ones among them, i.e., those with the Middle Eastern Sufi tradition and Malay folk poetry.

Institut Vostokovedenia, Moscow