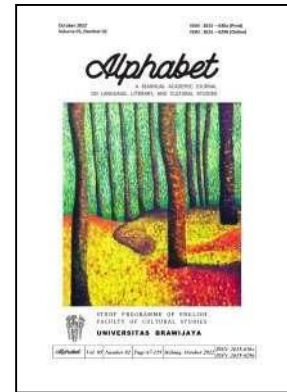


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Qasidah and Dangdut as a Means for Political Contestation in Romansha's *Kelir Slindet* and *Telembuk: Dangdut dan Kisah Cinta yang Keparat*

Rae Shella Tivani Mareta

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Qasidah and Dangdut as a Means for Political Contestation in Romansha's *Kelir Slindet* and *Telembuk: Dangdut dan Kisah Cinta yang Keparat*

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Rae Shella Tivani Mareta¹

Abstract

Qasidah and dangdut are two strikingly different genres of music that are very popular in Indramayu. Their difference is narrated in the Kedung Darma Romansha's novel series entitled *Kelir Slindet* and *Telembuk: Dangdut dan Kisah Cinta yang Keparat*. Qasidah and dangdut are depicted as a political tool used by two characters in the series, Pak Darmawan and Kaji Nasir, to win village head election. Pak Darmawan uses dangdut, whereas Kaji Nasir uses qasidah. This research aims to reveal the strategies of the two characters in using the two genres of music as their means to dominate political arena as well as the factors that influence differences in public perceptions of qasidah and dangdut. This was a qualitative descriptive study which employed Pierre Bourdieu's theory of field and habitus. The results show that dangdut is preferred over qasidah since it is not only considered as an entertainment but also represents the culture of Indramayu, resulting in the winning of Pak Darmawan in the election. In addition, the different choices, and perspectives of people in the two novels are influenced by social piety, prestige, experience, and taste.

Keywords: Qasidah; Dangdut; Habitus; Field; Political Contestation

Qasidah and dangdut are two popular genres of music in Indramayu, especially in the 90s. During the harvest season, the musical performances of both genres can appear every night, alternating from one village to another. In one corner of the village, local dangdut music combined with stage performances presents fun and energetic singers and boisterously dancing audience. In another corner, *santri* (students who follows Islamic religious education in Islamic boarding schools) and other residents often perform qasidah, terbangun, and gambus influenced by the strong Islamic culture in Indramayu, due to a great number of *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) in the area. This is probably what makes qasidah also popular in Indramayu (Umam, 2015).

Dangdut dan qasidah, as two popular and contrasting genres of music, are illustrated in Kedung Darma Romansha's *Kelir Slindet* (2014) dan *Telembuk: Dangdut dan Kisah Cinta yang*

Keparat (2020). The novels talk about socio-cultural spectrum of Indramayu Regency and its people. As the largest rice-producing area in Indonesia, Indramayu is one of the poorest districts in West Java. There is a social and economic gap which causes socio-cultural problems, such as differences in norms within a region, unequal education, urbanization, and so on (Safitri et al., 2019). At this point, dangdut and qasidah become an entertainment and escapism for people which is also seen as a tool to gain people's voices, as represented by Pak Darmawan and Kaji Nasir. The two figures are candidates for the village head of Cikedung Village. Both have their own strategies to gain power in the village. Pak Darmawan uses dangdut to campaign for his candidacy and Kaji Nasir uses qasidah to attract people. When it comes to choosing between dangdut and qasidah, there are different perceptions among the people. Thus, the purpose of this article is

¹ Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Airlangga, Surabaya, Indonesia. Email: rae.ella.tivani-2021@fib.unair.ac.id

to reveal the strategies of the two characters, Pak Darmawan and Kaji Nasir, to dominate the field through dangdut and qasidah and the factors that affect differences in public perception of both genres of music.

This research employed Pierre Bourdieu's theory of habitus and field. Habitus is a historical product that was formed after humans were born and interacted with society in a certain space and time. Habitus is not innate or natural but is the result of learning through parenting and socializing in society. The learning process is very subtle, and unconscious, and appears as a natural thing. In socializing, an individual is not a completely free agent, nor is it a passive product of the social structure. Habitus is closely related to the field or arena because the practices or actions of agents are the habitus formed by the field. Thus, habitus is understood as a cultural action. The field in Bourdieu's concept is an arena or a space as a place for social actors/agents to compete for various material resources or symbolic power. Competition in the field aims to ensure differences and the status of social actors who are used as sources of symbolic power (Bourdieu, 2017).

According to Bourdieu, habitus is a system through a combination of objective structure and personal history, long-lasting and changing dispositions that serve as a generative basis for objectively structured and integrated practices. Habitus is an internalization of diverse socio-cultural values and a sense of the game (feel for the game) that generates various movements that are adapted to the game being played (Bourdieu, 2017). In other words, habitus is the result of internalizing the structure of the social world or the inner social structure. Furthermore, Bourdieu develops a theory of the cultural field in which the analysis covers the structure of the cultural field as well as the position of this field within the power structure in the wider social realm. To enter the field and be able to "play" in the battle of power in it, one must have a habitus that directs him to be able to guard or adapt before he enters the field. He must have knowledge and skills as well as talents to be accepted as a legitimate player. This means that he must try to use all his knowledge, skills,

and talents in the most profitable way possible. To succeed, he must invest all the capital he has to get the most benefit or profit from his efforts to participate in the field (Bourdieu, 1977).

Strategy and trajectory are the two main concepts that Bourdieu uses in his field theory. Strategy can be understood as praxis with a certain specific orientation. As a product of habitus, strategy is a disposition that is subconscious and depends on the position occupied by the agent in the field and on what problems underlie confrontation. That is what builds the form of the battle and the direction of its completion. Meanwhile, trajectory is the result of the struggle and struggles to achieve symbolic capital in the field and can be observed through a network of economic, cultural, and social relations (Bourdieu, 1984). Each field, whether cultural, political, economic or others, is a relatively autonomous but homologous arena (has the same structure). The structure of the field for any given moment is determined by the relations between the positions of the agents in the field, therefore the field is a dynamic concept, every change in the position of the agent will result in a change in the structure of the field.

In this study, several methods were used to collect data. The methods were used to find the soundest arguments on the object of the research. The source of the data was from two novels, namely *Kelir Slindet* and *Telebuk: Dangdut dan Kisah Cinta yang Keparat* written by Kedung Darma Romansha. The data obtained for this study were story units containing contestations between qasidah and dangdut as tools for power struggles in the framework of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of habitus and field. The data collected in this research was done by reading and grouping the data. The grouping of data was adjusted to the aspects written in the discussion of this research.

STRATEGIES IN DOMINATING THE FIELD

The novels portray the power struggle carried out by two characters, Pak Darmawan and Kaji Nasir. Both are candidates for the village head of Cikedung Village, one of the villages in Indramayu Regency, West Java. They

have their own strategy to gain power. This is illustrated in the following quotations and discussion. In the novel *Kelir Slindet*, it is narrated that the qasidah and dangdut are used to win votes in the village head election.

Pak Darmawan itu asyik dengan anak-anak muda seperti kita. Dia santai. Dia mengerti gejala anak muda. Jelas beda dengan Kaji Nasir, ...Mangkannya pilih Pak Darmawan! (Romansha, 2014)

(Pak Darmawan understands young people like us. He is easy going. He understands turmoil in youth. It is clearly different from Kaji Nasir, ...That is why I choose Pak Darmawan!)

The aforementioned statement comes from a character named Sondak. In the novel *Kelir Slindet*, it is told that Sondak is Pak Darmawan's success team for the election of the village head. In a dangdut show, according to Sondak, Pak Darmawan goes up on stage and sings with a dangdut singer. Pak Darmawan also pays for food and drinks for the people who are watching. Sondak, as a member of Pak Darmawan's success team, talks with young people in persuasive manners so that they attracted to choose Pak Darmawan. On the other hand, Kaji Nasir, tries to win votes by presenting qasidah performance. It can be concluded that the contestation between dangdut and qasidah arises because of a political agenda.

Libat saja dangdutan itu, Ibu-Ibu, Bapak-Bapak. Silit diler-ler. Susu pating gandul. Nanti kalau di neraka, lubang bokongnya itu akan ditusuk. Dlesep. Tolong, tolong... Tapi banyak iman mereka yang bisa menolong. Betul apa betul, Ibu-Ibu? Bapak-Bapak? Mereka semua menjawab serempak dan hanyut dalam ceramah Mukimin.... Kalau nyawer saja gampang keluarnya. Selip ke susu sana, selip ke susu sini. Selip ke bokong. Eh..., buat menyumbang madrasah naudzubillah pelitnya." (Romansha, 2020)

(Just look at the dangdut show, ladies and gentlemen. Showing buttocks. Showing breasts. Later in hell, the hole in the buttocks will be stabbed. Inserted. Please, please... But only their faith can

help. Right, ladies? gentlemen?' They all answer in unison and are lost in Mukimin's speech.... How easy it is to give money. Slip into the breast there, slip into breast here. Slip into the buttocks. Uh..., how difficult it is to donate money to an Islamic school)

The quote above is conveyed by Kaji Nasir. He has a strategy to make the people who have a strong faith not to be influenced by the dangdut show held by his rival, Pak Darmawan. Because the qasidah and the dangdut performance are not far away, Kaji Nasir also wants the dangdut audience to remember their sins. His main goal is to lead Pak Darmawan's voters to vote for him instead.

After the village head election, the results show that it is Pak Darmawan who wins the fierce competition. However, after becoming the village head, Pak Darmawan no longer holds dangdut events. He wants to change his image into a pious person. This change is a strategy so that he is more respected and heard by the community.

Hampir dua tahun ini Pak Darmawan menjadi kumwu. Sejak dua tahun belakangan pula sikap Pak Darmawan mulai berubah. Lebih banyak menahan diri jika ada tanggapan organ tunggal. Dia hanya akan naik sekali saja dengan membaa uang gepakan puluhan ribu lalu membuangnya cuma-cuma ke tangan penyanyi dangdut. Jogetnya tidak selepas dulu. Sekali lagi, ia lebih menahan diri untuk menjaga pamornya sebagai kumwu." (Romansha, 2020)

(Pak Darmawan has become the village head for almost two years. In the last two years, Pak Darmawan's attitude has begun to change. He is more restraint if there is an organ show. He will only go up once by carrying tens of thousands and then throwing them away for free into the hands of dangdut singers. The dance does not last long. Once again, he is more restraint in maintaining his prestige as the village head.)

From the discussion above, it can be said that there are different strategies exercised by Pak Darmawan and Kaji Nasir. Pak Darmawan

uses dangdut and Kaji Nasir uses qasidah. Pak Darmawan uses dangdut as a political tool because most voters are in productive ages or teenagers who can be approached with dangdut music. Meanwhile, Kaji Nasir prefers to approach those who have a strong Islamic faith and those who are in the upper social level in society. Even though there are many Islamic boarding schools in the area which might become an advantage for Kaji Nasir, Pak Darmawan somehow manages to win the election with his dangdut show strategy.

PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF QASIDAH AND DANGDUT

The society described in the two novels has a different perspective on qasidah and dangdut. In *Kelir Slindet*, it is told that a character named Saritem forbids her daughter, Safitri, to listen to dangdut songs and dance even though Safitri was in her own room. Saritem says, *Eh, Kamu sudah berani melawan ya? Setan Alas! Makanya, Kalau dibilang orang tua nurut. Sekarang lihat kamu! Kayak orang stress* (Romansha, 2014, p. 18) (Hey, you have the courage to fight me, huh? You demon! I told you to obey your parents. Now look at you! You look like a lunatic). Saritem was an ex *telembuk* (prostitute). Saritem considers that dangdut is synonymous with *pertelembukan* (prostitution). She does not want her daughter to follow in her footsteps. She tells her daughter to learn qasidah and become a lead singer in a qasidah group in their village. Saritem feels happy when she can boast about her daughter who becomes a lead singer of a qasidah group. She feels her social class is at a higher level.

In this case, Saritem wants to be seen by following the social structure. This is in accordance with Bourdieu's argument which explains that an individual's actions, or in the genetic structural model of habitus called agents, are affected by collective or social structures. Thus, agents try to follow the structure that has been set by society and adapt to what agents have learned and the experiences they have gained.

Although it appears that dangdut is at the lower level than qasidah, there are also upper or upper middle class people who like dangdut. The novel depicts how young people from

respectable parents who have a taste for dangdut music must be willing to hide behind a tree if they want to see the dangdut performance. This proves that social class is not a guarantee for someone to like qasidah or dangdut. Regarding taste of music, the characters in the novel who are considered as agents are free to act. Although the habitus reveals that they follow a collective construction, the agents still have the choice to determine what they like and want to do (Bourdieu, 2017).

In *Kelir Slindet*, it is narrated that the lyric of a dangdut song are more in line with the character's mood. Safitri, Saritem's daughter, plays the song loudly in her room while she dances to the beat of typical *pantura* dangdut music. Although Safitri is a qasidah singer, she prefers dangdut music because it suits her mood better. When listening to the song, Safitri feels sad because her heart is being played with by her loved one, which is in line with the aforementioned lyric.

Lara ati saban dina saban bengi / Mikiri pujaan kang wis ninggal kari / Ning pikiran kaya kuat kaya beli / Ning tekade kaya-kaya bagan mati. / Waktu kien sun lagi digawe lara / Ning pujaan kang bengene setia / Saiki isun lagi rasa kelingan / Janji bengen jare kuh emong pisahan / Dub... kelingan pujaan / Wis lawas kita pisahan / Yen bengi sun rasa kaimpi / Yen turu oralali (Romansha, 2014)

(Heartache every day and every night / thinking about my love who is gone / in my mind as strong as not / it feels like I want to die / Currently I am hurted / by my love who used to be faithful / now I am remembering / the promise he said that he did not want to part / Oh...remembering him / who is long gone / who comes to my dream / who cannot be forgotten in my sleeps)

As already mentioned, Saritem wants her daughter to continue to be a qasidah singer to cover up her mistakes of being a *telembuk* or an immoral woman. Thus, their children are prohibited from entering or even not allowed to love dangdut music. This is because dangdut is considered negative and displays obscene things. Saritem tries to change herself into a

good woman who is considered by society to be the right thing, such as being a pious woman by telling Safitri to do *iffah* since her early childhood. *Iffah* means avoiding something which is forbidden and doubtful. This attitude will strengthen a person's religiosity. This is in line with Bourdieu's argument that existing structures in society are internalized by social actors so that they function effectively. Internalization takes place through parenting, playing activities, and also education in the community, both consciously and unconsciously. However, Safitri refuses to submit to social constructions after being ridiculed for too long by the people around her that the prostitute's child is also a bad person. This happens because although habitus is durable, it can change at any time.

The second novel, *Telembuk: Dangdut dan Kisah Cinta yang Keparat* also talks about the community's perspective on qasidah and dangdut, as illustrated in the following quotation.

Suara dangdut tarling bersabut-sabutan dengan suara qasidah. Berbeda dengan suara dangdut tarling, suara qasidah yang muncul dari speaker itu banyalah suara pita kaset grup qasidah Nasidaria. Sementara dangdut tarling langsung dari mulut penyanyi dangdut dengan lipstik merah jambon, campur goyangan meliuk-liuk seperti ulat keket. Dua lagu yang bersebrangan itu memang letaknya tak terlalu jauh. Berkisar lima ratus meter saja. Namun para pedagang kaki lima dan lesehan lebih banyak menumpuk di sekitar organ tunggal ketimbang pengajian.... Kaset qasidah sudah berulang kali diputar bolak-balik dengan lagu yang sama. Sementara dari arah barat, terdengar suara genit dengan entakan kendang yang rancak, ditambah pilihan lagu yang segudang dan cadangan artis sampai lima orang. (Romansha, 2020)

(The sound of dangdut echoes with the sound of qasidah. Unlike the dangdut sound, the sound of the qasidah that emerges from the speakers is only the sound of the cassette of Nasidaria group. While dangdut songs are directly from the mouth of the dangdut singers with pink lipstick, mixed with their dances

which look like a caterpillar's moves. The two opposite musics are indeed not too far apart. Just five hundred meters. However, the street vendors are more concentrated around the electronic organ performance the recitation.... The qasidah cassette has been repeatedly played back and forth with the same songs. Meanwhile, from the west, there is a flirtatious sound accompanied by the energetic beat of drums, plus a myriad of song choices and up to five backup singers.)

In the novel, it is told that Kaji Nasir and his children holds a recitation. They invite the people by playing qasidah cassettes because their qasidah singer, Safitri, has chosen to become a dangdut singer. However, Kaji Nasir fails to gather people to attend the recitation even though he uses qasidah music to attract them.

A change of perspective on qasidah and dangdut occurs to a character named Mukimin. He initially loved qasidah because it calmed his heart. Over the time, he begins to like dangdut as illustrated in the following quotation.

Tanggapan yang paling dicarinya adalah organ tunggal, karena itu membuatnya merasa bebas bergerak, bergoyang, dan melayangkan uang puluhan ribu di depan penyanyi dangdut. Ia seperti mendapatkan kepuasan yang tak ternilai. (Romansha, 2020)

(The response he most seeks is an electronic organ performance, because it makes him feel free to move, dance, and toss money in front of dangdut singers. It is like getting priceless satisfaction.)

It is described in the novel that as a teenager Mukimin is considered a delinquent by his family and neighborhood. Mukimin is then sent to a *pesantren* and during his two years of studying Islam, he changes and even becomes a preacher at various events. However, due to experiencing heartbreak and disappointment, he starts to like dangdut.

In *Kelir Slindet* and *Telembuk: Dangdut dan Kisah Cinta yang Keparat*, although dangdut is loved by many people, some still consider that

dangdut performances is a source of problems. It is shown in the following quotation.

Goyangan penyanyi dangdut itu semakin meggila... laki-laki itu terus meloloskan uangnya sampai tandas. Ia memeluk penyanyi itu dari belakang. Tangan si laki-laki merayap keatas... beberapa orang mengusir laki-laki itu dari panggung. Tiba-tiba Sondak melayangkan bogem mentah ke muka laki-laki kurus itu.... Sondak mengambil sebotol minuman dan memecabkannya. Orang-orang ribut. Laki-laki kurus itu mencoba bangkit dan melolos goloknya. Belum sempat mengeluarkan goloknya, sebuah botol bergerigi menancap di perut si laki-laki kurus...Laki-laki kurus itu terjatuh lemas dan tak sadarkan diri. Mati. Dan penyanyi organ tunggal itu tak lain adalah pacar Sondak.” (Romansha, 2020)

(The dangdut singer’s dance is getting crazier... the man keeps letting the money go until there is no more. He hugs the singer from behind. The man’s hand is crawling up... several people chase the man off the stage. Suddenly Sondak sends a punch to the thin man’s face.... Sondak takes a bottle of drink and breaks it. The people are in chaos. The thin man tries to get up and takes his machete. Before he can get his machete out, a jagged bottle strikes in the thin man’s stomach... The thin man falls and is unconscious. Dead. And the solo organ singer is none other than Sondak’s girlfriend)

It is described that the incident is a negative portrayal of the holding of a dangdut event in Indramayu. Some people think that dangdut performances are immoral and cause problems to the point of taking the people’s lives. All in all, it can be said that people’s habitus about dangdut and qasidah are affected by social piety, experience, prestige, and taste.

CONCLUSION

Kedung Darma Romansha’s *Kelir Slindet* dan *Telembuk: Dangdut dan Kisah Cinta yang Keparat* describe the habitus or perspectives of the people who become the characters in the two novels. From these different perspectives, two characters, namely Pak Darmawan and Kaji

Nasir, try their luck in winning the village head election by using qasidah and dangdut. Kaji Nasir often holds qasidah and recitation events, while Pak Darmawan often holds dangdut performances. After a fierce competition, Pak Darmawan eventually comes out as the winner. This signifies that dangdut is a foolproof political strategy to dominate the field in regard with the dynamics of the habitus in the village.

As discussed in this article, people in these novels have different views on qasidah and dangdut. Many people love qasidah because they feel calm when listening. They also believe that qasidah brings them closer to the God. Characters who like qasidah do not like dangdut because they consider dangdut performances to be immoral due to the clothes worn by the singers, indecent dances, and vulgar lyrics. On the other hand, people who like dangdut think that dangdut can understand their feelings and they feel freer and more relaxed when watching dangdut shows. Therefore, the factors that influence the different perspectives of society in the two novels are social piety, taste, and prestige.

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