

RUKUN NASUTION (1928-1998) AND HIS POETRY CORPUS: A Preliminary Study

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Abstract: A corpus of poetry by Rukun Nasution (1928-1998) found in 2018 has not been introduced or studied academically. This study is an initial survey that aimed to introduce the poet called Rukun Nasution and map the corpus of his poetry. Biographical writing methods combined with philology and social history found that Rukun Nasution only received formal education from the People's School (*Sekolah Rakyat*) for three years. He obtained knowledge mainly through religious non-formal learning forums (*majlis ta'lim*) and independent reading. Rukun Nasution identified available learning potentials around him and maximized it to advance his education. His poetry's creative dimension was manifested using the *aa-aa* rhyme, with general Islamic themes. This corpus includes three types: 1) his original compositions; 2) translations from Malay to vernacular Mandailing language; and 3) translation of poetries written in Malay script into Latin script. Rukun Nasution's creativity could be considered unique and extraordinary based on his limited education and external environment. Therefore, his corpus of poetry needs further investigation from philological, linguistic, and historical perspectives and an analysis of its content.

Keywords: Islamic poetry, Malay literature, vernacular literature, Rukun Nasution

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Introduction

Islam strongly recommends reading as one of the first commandments received by the Prophet Muhammad SAW, as recorded in the Qur'an Surah al-'Alaq/96: 1-5. The first verse implicitly commands written culture because reading requires writing. In historical records, the written tradition is an aspect of the strength of Islam compared to contemporary civilizations. Moreover, it is a factor in the fundamental changes brought by Islam into pre-Islamic Arab civilization that emphasizes oral tradition. The biography of the Prophet Muhammad indicates that he made written communication with heads of neighbouring states to introduce and spread Islam. His command to write the Qur'an verses is a testament to the importance of the writing tradition in Islam. Therefore, the Qur'an proclaimed the transition of information inheritance from the spoken to the written mode. Needless to say the writing system strongly indicates the progress of human civilization.

The Qur'an writing since the time of the Prophet was formalized and standardized during the caliphate of Uthman ibn 'Affan (644-656). The canonization guarantees that Muslims have a standard corpus of teachings that cannot be distorted throughout history. Furthermore, this writing tradition has become a main feature and advantage in Islamic civilization throughout its glorious history. It is strongly evidenced by the classical Islamic treasures in the scientific enka branches. Classical Muslim scientists are known for their high productivity in written works in their fields of expertise. The writings produced in that day still fill the scientific discourse of humankind. This situation reflects the large quantity and timeless quality of writing. The wealth of writings left by the early Muslim generations could be appreciated by reading the oldest bibliographical work in Islamic history. An example is *Kitâb al-Fihrist fî Akhbâr al-'Ulamâ' al-Mushannifîn*

min al-Qudamâ' wal-Muhadditsîn wa-Asmâ' Kutubi-him, written by Ibn al-Nadim at the end of the 10th century.¹ Another work is *Kasyf al-Zhunûn 'an Asâmî al-Kutub wa al-Funûn*, written by Hajj Khalifa in the 17th century.²

The spirit to write commanded by the Qur'an was supported by the introduction of paper technology to the Islamic world from China. This greatly simplifies book copying and transmission.³ Although most Islamic writings are in prose form, much information is written as poetry, such as Literature, Jurisprudence, Sufism, Morals, or Arabic grammar. The use of poetry to transmit Islamic knowledge beautifies and makes it easy to read, hear, and remember.⁴

The main language of Islamic information is Arabic because the Qur'an was revealed in Arabic media. The Prophet Muhammad was also an Arab, and the early Islamic history was the Arabian Peninsula. However, several other languages have emerged as media of Islamic information, including Persian, Urdu, Turkish, Swahili, and Malay. The relevance and contribution of these languages are relevant to the development of Islam in areas where they are primarily spoken.

Malay has been a relatively important language as a medium of Islamic information since the Islamization of the archipelago. However, this language became very important after the 13th century, when Islamic kingdoms began to form. The Islamic kingdoms of the archipelago spread throughout the islands used the Malay language as lingua franca. Most Islamic texts of the archipelago are in Malay,⁵ and some are original works by local poets. Similarly, Indonesian scholars are active in translating on a large scale.⁶ This translation closes the gap in the language skills of the wider community. Indeed, the golden age of Islamic scholarly activity was driven, among others, by translation sponsored by the Abbasid empire.⁷

The study of Islamic Malay literature is not a new realm because many studies have been conducted in this area. For instance, Braginsky⁸ covered the 7th to the 19th century on almost the entire span of Islamic Malay literature production. Chambert-Loir⁹ provided valuable information about translation procedures and the literature produced throughout history. Indeed, translation is an important mode of production of Islamic Malay literature. In line with this, Ilyas¹⁰ listed the works of Indonesian poets and described their contents, forming the basis for interesting future content analysis.

The work of Ja'far¹¹ was also relevant because it explained the position of traditional Islamic books in the Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah madrasa network. The madrasa network has provided Islamic education in the North Sumatra region since the 1930s. Despite modernization Al Washliyah madrasa network still uses traditional books in its curriculum.¹² Several other studies analyzed certain *ulema*-poets and explained their contribution to science and the religious life of their people. Syhnan¹³ analyzed the works of Ali Hasan Ahmad ad-Dary, an important cleric from South Tapanuli, while Dahlan¹⁴ examined Zainal Abidin Ahmad, an East Sumatran cleric in the early 20th century. Furthermore, Ja'far¹⁵ analyzed the contribution of Arsyad Talib Lubis, a prolific East Sumatran poet of his time. Roza¹⁶ explained how Islamic Malay manuscripts significantly contribute to the intellectual achievements of the archipelago. Other studies have also examined Islamic manuscripts from the Aceh region.¹⁷

This study aimed to introduce a corpus of Islamic religious poetry produced in the 1960s. The corpus of manuscripts was discovered in 2018, and it consists of eight titles of poetry. Five poems were written by Rukun Nasution (1928-1998), two are translations from Malay into the Mandailing vernacular language, while one manuscript is transcribed from Arabic Malay into

Latin script. The corpus was written in the Malay and Mandailing languages, each with four titles. A complete list of manuscripts is as follows:

No	Title	Language	Author	Description
1.	<i>Syair Pengajak Solat</i>	Malay	Rukun Nasution	
2.	<i>Doa/Syair Menjelang Pajar</i>	Malay	Rukun Nasution	
3.	<i>Jangan Salah Mengikut</i>	Malay	Rukun Nasution	
4.	<i>Ende Paingotkon</i>	Mandailing	Rukun Nasution	
5.	<i>Pagalak Puasa</i>	Mandailing	Rukun Nasution	
6.	<i>Syair Cormin Islam</i>	Mandailing	Muhammad Yasin	Translation
7.	<i>Paringgas Manuntut Ilmu</i>	Mandailing	Unknown	Translation
8.	<i>Syair Khabar Qiyamat</i>	Malay	Unknown	Transcription

This is a preliminary study because the poetry corpus has never been studied before. It aimed to introduce the poet Rukun Nasution through a biography emphasizing education, family background, and socio-religious conditions in his hometown. Additionally, this study aimed to describe and classify the corpus of poetry.

Rukun Nasution grew up from an ordinary family during the Dutch colonial reign over Indonesia and lived his youth until the Japanese colonial reign. He received his formal education from the People's School (*Sekolah Rakyat*) for three years, making his creativity to write poems a unique achievement. His works' composition, translation, and transliteration represent creativity, a good mastery of substance, and linguistic competence. From a philological perspective, Rukun Nasution's corpus of poetry is not challenging because it uses modern media. They are easily available at the time and place of the manuscript production. Furthermore, the titles of his poems imply the aim to convey the basics of Islamic teachings on various topics. Therefore, this corpus requires further in-depth study to determine its relevance and contribution to knowledge.

Methodology

This literary study focused on the content map of the manuscript and how it fits into its structure.¹⁸ It involved the dimension of social history that places and analyzes the text as a local Islamic socio-religious phenomenon by referring to Kuntowijoyo.¹⁹ Also, the perspective of Biography²⁰ and Philological Studies²¹ are used to a certain degree.

Data were obtained from several sources: first, documents of which the most important is the written corpus produced by Rukun Nasution. The corpus is divided into three books, each containing several poetic titles. Furthermore, the poet has access to a genealogical document (*tarombo*), showing his lineage to his native Mandailing.

Second, data were collected from informants comprising the direct heirs of Rukun Nasution. The eldest of his six children had died at the time of this study. Therefore, information was collected from his biological children, including Rafiah Nasution, Muhammad Daud Nasution, and Nurlaini Zakiah Nasution. Other informants comprised close relatives that could provide data, such as Nanum Dasopang and Retnawati Dasopang, the in-laws that knew Rukun Nasution since the 1960s.

This study also utilized the sites of Hajoran and Langgapayung Villages. Rukun Nasution was born, grew up, lived, and produced the script in Hajoran Village until the end of his life. The sub-district capital, Langgapayung, was an important place where he received his formal education and attended one of the most influential *majlis ta'lim*. Additionally, special visits were made to the village cemetery complex where Rukun Nasution and his family were found.

This study involved examining the original manuscript physically, finding traces of the writing process, and noting its

physical characteristics. It analyzed and classified the ideas in the manuscript and conducted interviews with informants. Furthermore, visits were made to relevant historical sites, including Hajoran Simaninggir, Hajoran Jae, Langgapayung, and surrounding areas. Content analysis was conducted by considering the poet's internal and external environment, while cross-checking was carried out with available references.

Results and Discussions

The results consist of the biography of Rukun Nasution and the poetry section.

Rukun Nasution's Biography Sketch

Human beings are born in a complex social system that partly determines their development. The social conditions, history, and tradition contribute to forming the life and choices of human children. The character of this study was born at the beginning of the 20th century and lived to its end. Therefore, his personality, life choices, and achievements must be seen and interpreted in the context of the 20th century.

1. Family Origin

Rukun Nasution's family left a *tarombo* (genealogical document) showing that the clan started with Sibaroar (Nasaktion), reportedly residing in the Panyabungan Tonga Village. This village is included in Mandailing Natal Regency, North Sumatra Province, in the current government administration. This seemingly supports the general belief in the Mandailing community. There one finds the Bagas Godang (Main House) of the Nasution clan and several graves of its early generations. Furthermore, the document shows that Rukun Nasution's great-grandfather migrated from Panyabungan Tonga, though there is no specific information

regarding the reason for moving. The *tarombo* document shows that the fifth generation of his great-grandfather called Sutan Kumala, moved to Sihepeng, Binanga. Gombal Batu, the sixth generation, moved to and settled in the Sihapas-hapas area, Aek Godang, North Padang Lawas, North Sumatra. This family seems to have settled in Sihapas-hapas for a long time because no record shows migration for the next five generations.

Japittasan, the eleventh generation, was recorded as living in Aek Horsik, Parimburan Village, Sungai Kanan, South Labuhanbatu. He was the first person to convert to Islam in the lineage of Rukun Nasution. The original handwritten genealogy document has special note on Japittasan that reads: “*Aek Horsik, mula2 Muslim.*” It is written in Latin script, except for ‘Muslim’ written in Arabic script. In the updated typed genealogy document, to the right of Japittasan’s name, there is an inscription in Latin letters, “*ninna mula mula mar agama Islam,*” meaning “reportedly the first to be Muslim.” This places Japittasan as the first Muslim in the family line. The twelfth generation, Lebai Yakin, Rukun Nasution’s grandfather, moved to Hajoran Jae Village, sub-district of Sungai Kanan. Rukun Nasution’s father, Lebai Ibrahim Nasution (1893-1960), moved with his family to Hajoran Simaninggir village, about three kilometers to the west.

Hajoran Village comprises hamlets of Hajoran Jae, Hajoran Tonga, Hajoran Julu, Hajoran Simaninggir, and Rantau Jior. The Mandailing community commonly uses the naming of the hamlet using Jae-Tonga-Julu (Downstream-Middle-Upstream). It refers to the river’s flow that crosses or is adjacent to the respective hamlets. In this case, Jae-Tonga-Julu refers to the position of the three hamlets on the banks of the Sungai Kanan flowing from west to east. This river was the main water source and transportation route for the area before the improvement of land transportation in the late 1970s. Sungai Kanan was adopted

as the name of the local sub-district where Rukun Nasution spent his life.

Childhood and Education

Rukun Nasution was born in 1928 as the eldest of two children. However, little is known about his childhood due to a lack of sources. During this study, there were no residents of the same age as Rukun Nasution. His childhood and youth were spent during Dutch and Japanese colonialism and the turmoil that marked the early years of Indonesian independence. Rukun Nasution's birth village is about 10 km from Langgapayung, the capital of Sungai Kanan sub-district.

Due to the long distance, few educational opportunities were available for the little Rukun Nasution. There was no formal school in Hajoran Village, with the first institution being established in 1958. It was founded by Lukmanul Hakim Nasution, the younger brother of Rukun Nasution. However, he attended the formal basic education of the People's School (*Sekolah Rakyat*) in Langgapayung, where this study found his diploma. Although it is outdated, it read that Rukun Nasution underwent three years of basic education and graduated in 1940 aged 12 years. According to Retnawati Dasopang, a family member from the wife's side, the school is located at the southern end of Pekan Langgapayung. After the independence era, the location was used as the center of the sub-district administration and as the Sungai Kanan sub-district head residence. This was before constructing the new Sungai Kanan sub-district office complex to the west of Langgapayung.

Rukun Nasution did not receive any formal education other than the People's School. Completing the People's School was an achievement in the 1940s. Although accurate statistics are not available, only a few children in their generation receive

formal education. This education helped Rukun Nasution read Arabic (Qur'an), Arabic-Malay, and Latin letters. Also, he wrote neatly in two Arabic and Latin scripts and could count well.

Rukun Nasution's formal education stopped at the elementary level due to several factors. He completed his People's School before the entry of Japan to Indonesia, a period uncondusive to education. Furthermore, there was little motivation from his parents, especially the mother, because of the fear of separation from their eldest child. The mother was worried the Japanese would recruit her son into the army in case he went to school in the city. At that time, Japan was implementing mandatory military service for young people to cover the shortage of soldiers due to their involvement in World War II. Rukun Nasution's mother's feeling was reinforced by his position as the eldest child with only one younger sibling. He seemed to regret the situation a little. Her eldest daughter, Rafiah Nasution, stated that he used these memories to motivate his children pursue education seriously. Rukun Nasution often reminisced about that time, stating in local language: "*Pade hamu nasikolai inang, au najolo na sikola au harana masoi zaman panjajahan, oppungmu pe na dipaksa ia au,*" meaning: "My daughter, attend your school seriously, I did not go to school due to colonial situations, and your grandmother did not force me to go to school either."

Rukun Nasution sought further knowledge through non-formal channels, such as religious teaching circle (*majlis ta'lim*). He actively participated in *majlis ta'lim* in the sub-district capital, Langgapayung, cared for by Tuan Guru Ahmad Syekh Abdurrabbi Siregar, a cleric and a direct student of Sheikh Sulayman Arrasuli, Candung, West Sumatra. Arrasuli is the founder of PERTI, which manages madrasas, including those in North Sumatra.²² Sheikh Abdurrabbi's *majlis ta'lim* combined several religious activities. Normally, Rukun Nasution would depart from Hajoran Village

after Thursday Ashr prayers by riding a bicycle for about 10 km. The activity began with congregational Maghrib and Isha prayers, followed by *tawajuh* (facing oneself and making one's heart to Allah) throughout the night. On Friday morning, a sermons session was held and attended by a larger congregation, some of whom did not participate in the *tawajuh* activity. This lasted until a noon just before the Friday prayer. The activity is commonly called by locals as “*mangaji*,” “*tawajuh*,” or “*maramal*”. Rukun Nasution participated in these activities until his death and was only absent for strong reasons, such as illness. Rafiah Nasution, the daughter that took care of him before his death, explained that he ‘forced himself’ to attend the activity even when his health condition had seriously deteriorated. Rukun Nasution did not ail for long and attended Langgapayung for the *tawajuh*, except in the last two weeks of his life. According to Ustaz Aminuddin Syekh Siregar, Rukun Nasution diligently attended the *tawajuh* from the time of Sheikh Abdurrabbi to the time of Ustaz Aminuddin. Ustaz Aminuddin Syekh stated this during the release of Rukun Nasution's body on Thursday 15 January 1998, based on the memory of Hasan Asari, present at that moment.

Rukun Nasution also consistently attended *majlis ta'lim* in his hamlet, Hajoran Simaninggir. The term commonly used was *markitab* because the *majlis ta'lim* was based on certain books (*kitab*). The most dominant material was Islamic Theology (*Tawhid*) and Islamic Law (*Fiqh, Pekah*). Moreover, the most dominant book used was the Book of *Sifat Duapuluh*, which explains the main points of Islamic faith, such as the attributes of Allah SWT and the Prophet Muhammad SAW. The *markitab* activities were guided by Ustaz Lukmanul Hakim Nasution, the younger brother of Rukun Nasution. He is a student of Tuan Guru Ahmad Syekh Abdurrabbi Langgapayung. Ustaz

Lukmanul Hakim Nasution continued his education at Madrasah Tarbiyah Islamiyah Candung, West Sumatra, studying directly with Sheikh Sulayman Arrasuli. In 1983, he moved to Rantauprapat, and the study was continued by Ustaz Hasanuddin Siregar, popularly known as Guru Uddin. Ustaz Hasanuddin Siregar was later replaced by Ustaz Aminuddin Syekh Siregar, specially invited from Langgapayung.

This description shows that Rukun Nasution had limited formal education from the People's School, though his passion for learning never faded until the end of his life. Non-formal *majlis ta'lim* education became his most important source of religious knowledge after graduating from the three-year People's School.

Diligent Reader Until Old Age

Rukun Nasution was an avid reader. Sungai Kanan sub-district is relatively underdeveloped in educational facilities compared to the adjacent Kotapinang sub-district. Muhammad Daud Nasution expressed his memory of one of Rukun Nasution's habits as follows:

In the east corner in front of our house, he has a wooden writing desk that he made himself. The table was dark green, with a drawer on the top right and small storage underneath. He sat there very often reading sometimes for quite a while. What I remember most often is that he read the *Bulletin Dakwah* which I think was sent from Jakarta. Sometimes he also read religious verses in a fairly strong voice heard from all directions of the house. Our house is not big. Sometimes he brought magazines to *sopo godang*, a place for deliberation to hold a traditional assembly, in the middle of the large courtyard in front of our house. I think it was *Kiblat* magazine. He read a lot and this habit made him a bit different from most hamlet people because at that time, in Hajoran Village,

it was uncommon for people to read. People were more concerned with their agricultural fields.

Rukun Nasution regularly read the *Bulletin Dakwah*, *Kiblat* magazine, and the *Panji Masyarakat* magazine. According to his youngest child, Nurlaini Zakiyah Nasution, these were an important part of his inherited documents. When Rukun Nasution died, his documents were packed into boxes, but they were neglected by his children. Until 2018, the inheritance box was dismantled when his grandson was about to occupy his heritage house. Many of the magazines and bulletins have been degraded and unworthy of reading. Fortunately, three books are in good condition and worth reading, as described in the next section.

Rukun Nasution's intellectual capital combined a three-year formal schools, consistency in attending *majlis ta'lim*, and a good reading tradition. His writing ability rests on a combination of these three factors. Nothing else in his life explains this writing tradition, making his corpus of poetry extraordinary. According to his children, Rukun Nasution wrote at his work desk in addition to reading. However, they never knew what he was writing until the paper was discovered. Rafiah Nasution stated that they thought he only read other people's poetry, not his compositions.

Rukun Nasution lived for 70 years and was cared for by his eldest daughter Rafiah Nasution during his last days. Although his body was losing strength, his fighting spirit never left. Rafiah Nasution remembers that he actively read and participated in the *majlis ta'lim* activities and only gave up in the last two weeks of his life. Rukun Nasution passed away peacefully at his residence in Hajoran Simaninggir on Thursday, 15 January 1998 (16 Ramadan 1418). His body was buried in a public cemetery east of the Village close to with his wife, mother, and father who had died earlier.

Family Life

Rukun Nasution was the eldest child and very close to his parents, especially his mother. Mandailing people are paternalistic, and boys have more cultural values. Therefore, he always obeyed his mother, such as not pursuing his higher formal education. Rukun Nasution was married to his *boru tulang* (cousin from mother side) at a young age, around 16 or 17 years old. Arranged marriages at a young age were common practice at that time. Also, the marriage was intended to avoid the Japanese military service program. However, this marriage did not last long due to certain discrepancies, and Rukun Nasution decided to divorce his wife, as stated by Rafiah Nasution.

Around 1948, Rukun Nasution married Asniah Dasopang, his companion until the end of his life. Rukun Nasution's handwriting document shows that his first child was born in June 1949 but died in infancy. Asniah Dasopang gave him 9 children, but only 6 reached adulthood.

Education was an important mission for Rukun Nasution and his wife, as seen by their efforts to support their children's education. In his village, he was often described as 'One that never saw the sun', meaning he went to the fields before sunrise and returned when the sun was about to set. He did all this for the sake of his vision of his children's education. Although Rukun Nasution was unlucky to receive a high education, he could be proud of the success of his children's education. His family is among the most successful in Hajoran Village, or even in the Sungai Kanan sub-district in terms of education. Of his six children, one does not have a bachelor's degree, three achieved doctoral education, and two obtained the academic position of Professor at UIN SU Medan.

Rukun Nasution's children left Hajoran Village for further education. Lahmuddin Nasution (the oldest) migrated in 1968

for further studies in Medan and was later joined by his younger brothers. His neighbors often criticized Rukun Nasution for letting his children leave when needed to help cultivate the fields. Three of his children, Lahmuddin, Hasan, and Yusnaili, live in Medan, while the rest live in Hajoran. According to his youngest child, Nurlaini, neighbors often asked her mother about her children all leaving for studies. In response, she joked that she and her husband had a unique fate resembling a tree stump (*tukko*) without branches and leaves, aging in solitude. Rukun Nasution and his wife never doubted that education is the best future capital for their children. This is evidenced by their decision to release all their children to leave the village to pursue education.

Economic Life

Sungai Kanan sub-district is an agricultural area with rubber as the main crop. After the 1980s, oil palm became popular, and the *prima donna* competed with rubber. Rukun Nasution inherited several fields of rubber plantation from his father and later developed others. His income from rubber plantations was sufficient to support his family. However, his commitment to sending all his children to school increased his economic burden. He faced a dilemma when his rubber plantation needed rejuvenation while the cost of his children's education increased.

Rukun Nasution worked as a rubber tree tapper as all the Hajoran people of his generation. His wife and children did the same to help the family economically because Hajoran did not offer many alternatives. The community agricultural life revolved around farming by clearing native forests or rejuvenating old rubber plantations until the 1970s. New fields are planted with rice and other short-lived crops, such as vegetables, sugarcane, papaya, or cassava. These plants are maintained for 2-3 years,

awaiting the development of rubber, the main long-term crop. The community relied on local rubber seeds until the 1980s because hybrid seeds were not widely known and were considered vulnerable to diseases and short-lived.

Rukun Nasution once took the initiative to conduct business in the rubber sap sector, though he did not own a large rubber plantation. He started his business as a sap collector from tappers of the family's rubber tree. Since he owned several garden plots, part of the sap was tapped by his family, and the rest by hired people. Rubber tappers (*pakkorek*) are divided into those tapping their rubber trees and those tapping rubber trees belonging to others. The second type is called *pangomo* (hired person). Generally, tappers and rubber plantation owners share the net income equally. This is why the *pangomo* is often referred to as a *parbagi-dua*, meaning those receiving half the work results.

Rubber collectors are commonly referred to as *toke gota* (sap *tauke*) in Hajoran and its surroundings. The Hajoran consists of the first level, *toke menek* (small *tauke*), comprising collectors with limited capital and only buying a few hundred kilograms of sap every week.²³ After considering price differences or fluctuations, *toke menek* usually sells the sap collected in Hajoran to a second-level *tauke*, known as *toke godang* (big *tauke*). They have extensive rubber plantations and large capital. *Toke Godang* collected tens of tons of sap before selling to a rubber factory owned by Chinese businessmen. They used to bring the sap to Langgapayung using a raft²⁴ along the Kanan River until the early 1980s. Langgapayung has a port for landing latex not far downstream from the Sumatran causeway bridge. The sap is transported from the port to the factory by truck. However, the latex *tauke* in Hajoran started bringing their sap directly to the factory by a truck as the quality of the roads improved.

Rukun Nasution also supported his family's economy by opening a convenience store or a grocery shop. The shop measuring about 2.5 x 4 meters was built on the east side, integrated with his residence. He sold various kitchen necessities, children's snacks, and rubber farmer equipment such as tapping knives, sharpening stones, flip-flops, and alum. Also, his wife was a hawker seller in the vicinity of Hajoran Public Elementary School.

All members of the Rukun Nasution family contributed to the family economy by optimizing income through rubber tapping. His wife creatively optimized the economic value of each asset, while the large yard of his house was used to raise chickens and ducks. Furthermore, his wife was skilled at sewing or patching clothes and *mukena*, a white cloak covering a woman's head and body worn at prayer for villagers. Asniah Dasopang managed the economic potential of the many candlenuts that fell and scattered in the fields. The candlenut fruit is dried in the sun, the shell is broken, and the contents were sold to the market after collecting one or two kilograms. She used the tamarind Gelugur fruit chopped into pieces, dried, and sold to the Langgapayung market. Another practice was drying large quantities of chili and then storing them in cans for use when fresh chilies were unavailable. All economic efforts were aimed to meet family expenses, especially the extra costs of sending their children to school.

Social and Religious Life

Muhammad Daud stated that Rukun Nasution actively participated in all social activities in his hamlet, such as fixing roads or taking care of mosques. When a resident of Hajoran Village builds a new house, the neighbors come in to help. The community built most houses in the Hajoran Simaninggir

hamlet until the 1970s. The houses were built using easily available wood and bamboo materials. In contrast, wealthy families brought in professional artisans outside the hamlet to build their homes because they needed more quality and style. However, the initial process of building a house (*pajongjong bagas*) involved the whole community under the direction of professional builders.

Rukun Nasution cared about national politics, as seen by pictures or logos of Islamic parties on the walls of his residence, such as Masyumi, the NU Party, the PSII Party, the Perti Party, and the United Development Party. The residents of Hajoran Simaninggir are constituents of Islamic parties. In the 1982 general election, Rukun Nasution managed the PPP campaign in Hajoran and was instrumental in welcoming the arrival of the party's national campaigner, Nuddin Lubis, from Jakarta, while his wife provided food for the guests. Rukun Nasution frequently disagreed with the Sungai Kanan sub-district head due to his steadfastness in defending the Islamic party. A sub-district head was a powerful person and a supporter of the Golongan Karya Party.

Rukun Nasution lived in Hajoran Simaninggir, a relatively religious hamlet. The religious understanding of the community is *Ahlussunnah waljamaah*, with practices referring to the Syafii school of jurisprudence. This must be interpreted in a layman's way because most people have limited religious knowledge. The genealogy of the religious understanding of Hajoran Village is mainly continued to West Sumatra, especially Candung. The main figure of the genealogy is Tuan Guru Ahmad Syekh Abdurrabbi Siregar. The second and most intense religious figure of Hajoran Simaninggir's hamlet is Ustaz Lukmanul Hakim Nasution. He is the younger brother of Rukun Nasution and a student of Sheikh Abdurrabbi and Sheikh Sulayman Arrasuli Candung. Ustaz Lukman had a great influence, especially through the

Madrasah Tarbiyah Islamiyah, which he founded in 1958 in Hajoran Simaninggir. Since then, the madrasa has become a tower of religious knowledge for Hajoran Village and its surroundings.

Rukun Nasution is a religious person, as stated by his sister-in-law, Nanum Dasopang, once living in his family. He regularly performed congregational prayers at the Istiqomah mosque, about 100 meters in front of his house. Also, Rukun Nasution invited his sons to *salah jama'ah*, a congregation that prays in the mosque, especially at times of *Maghrib*, *Isha'* and *Fajr*. However, the number of worshipers was often very small at *Zuhur* and *Asyar* because most hamlet residents were in the fields all afternoon. At times Rukun Nasution recited religious poems through the mosque's loudspeaker before prayer time.

Rukun Nasution and his family observed fasting throughout Ramadan and worked the fields under the hot sun. In the evenings, he participated in Qur'anic recitation activities at the mosque. Rukun Nasution read the Qur'an according to the principles of the science of recitation and ensured that all his children did the same. During Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, he recited *takbir* at his house in the morning while waiting to attend Eid prayers with other residents in the mosque. Furthermore, during Eid, he took his family on a pilgrimage to the family cemetery on the edge of Hajoran Simaninggir's hamlet. This is where his mother, father, and several other relatives are buried. Their children were also brought to visit their grandfather's grave, Lobe Yakin, in Hajoran Jae, a hamlet about 4 kilometers to the east.

Rukun Nasution was also active in community religious activities, such as visiting the sick and participating in burial procession when a resident died. Hajoran and its surroundings apply the religious tradition of *tahlilan* for three nights following the death of a person. Other community members take shifts

guarding the graves of the recently deceased for seven days while reading the Qur'an.

Corpus of Islamic Religious Poetry of Rukun Nasution Organization, Writing, and Script Production

The entire manuscript left by Rukun Nasution consists of three bound notebooks. It is ordered based on the physical condition of the books, where the oldest comes first.

First Book

The media used is an ordinary notebook measuring 15 x 18.5 cm, with 50 gr white paper thickness, wrapped with a thicker brown softcover. Using a fine fishing line, the owner once covered this book with a blue plastic sheath sewn. However, the plastic shield was no longer intact when they were found. Only a few remained, attached to the side of the binding. This book is at least three decades old, as indicated by a paragraph of Mandailing notes at the end of the book, which reads:

Saér on nadibahasa daérahon ni si Rukun Nasution, Hajoran Kac: Sungé Kanan Kab: Lab. Batu Prop: Sumatera Utara. Sidungna diari Abad jam 12.30 tgl: 4-8-1969. Siap disalin tu buku ön tgl 1-1-1409H/14-8-1988M, jam 9.30 malam Abad. Alhamdulillah.

This note is followed by the signature of the person concerned, with his initial: "Er: Nast."²⁵ The translation was completed in 1969 and copied back into the book in 1988. However, there is no information regarding the original manuscript produced in 1969.

The book's contents are finely lined in black, with a space of 7 mm between the lines. It has 64 sheets or 128 pages, and the manuscript was written using 121 pages. There are 2 blank pages at the beginning and 5 blank pages at the end. This first

book contains a verse entitled “Syair Cormin Islam,” with 411 stanzas. The phrase “*nadibahasa daérahon*” in the quote means ‘translated into the local language.’ It is the Mandailing language commonly used in the Sungai Kanan sub-district. The original author and the general context of writing are indicated in stanzas 401-402, as follows:

Habisma saér bata sudena,

Sian au anak mangaji.

Muhammad Yasin goar niiba,

Anak ni Abbas Perak nagori.

Murid ni Tuan Guru di Langkat kota,

Syekh ‘Abdul Wahhab on ma goarna.

Borkat do‘ana salamat sudéna,

Dapot tarsusun carito tubita.

The two verses state that the original poet’s name was Muhammad Yasin ibn Abbas from Perak. He was a student of Sheikh Abdul Wahab Babussalam Langkat. It would be interesting to explore this aspect, but it is not the main goal of this paper.

Second Book

The second book is an ordinary notebook measuring 17.5 x 24 cm, with a thickness of 50 grams of white paper. It is a fine black stripe model with a 7 mm spacing between the lines. The book consists of 73 sheets or 146 pages, 77 of which were used to write the manuscript. Similarly, there are 2 blank pages at the beginning and 67 blank pages at the end. This book contains only one poem, entitled “*Syair Khobar Qiyamat*,” in Malay, with 455 stanzas.

Information on the colophon shows that this is another poet's work that used Malay Arabic script and was transcribed into Latin script by Rukun Nasution. This is obtained from the notes at the poem's beginning before the first stanza, which reads: "*Inilah yang bernama Syair Khobar Qiyamat adanya disalin kebuku ini malam Ahad tanggal 3-10-1993 M*" (This is *Syair Khobar Qiyamat* copied into this book on Sunday night, 3-10-1993 AD). The date 12-11-1993 AD appears at the end, indicating that the production period of the manuscript was 1993, and the copying and transcription process took about 40 days.

Third Book

The third book is an ordinary notebook measuring 18 x 25 cm, with 50 gr white paper thickness. It is a fine black stripe model with a spacing of 7 mm between the lines. The book has 78 sheets or 156 pages, 96 of which were used to write the manuscript. There is no blank page at the beginning, but there are 60 blank pages at the end. The book's front cover has a note: "31-3-1995, Rukun Nst", indicating the age of the manuscript. Each verse starts on an odd page, leaving one blank page.

This book contains the following six poetries:

- 1) *Paringgas Manuntut Ilmu (Urging to Seek Knowledge)*, in the Mandailing language comprises 36 stanzas from pages 1-6 of the book. There is a brief note about the history of the manuscript: "*Nadipaimbar sian kitab Ass'adah Abadiah karanganni tuan mufti Kualuh sambil dibahasa daérahon ni Si Rukun Nasution di Hajoran Simaninggir Sungai Kanan Labuhan Batu.*" This was transferred from the book *Ass'adah Abadiah* by Tuan Mufti [Kingdom] Kualuh, and in the regional language by the Rukun Nasution in Hajoran Simaninggir Sungai Kanan Labuhan Batu.

The mufti in question has not been identified.

- 2) *Pengajak Sholat* (Prayer Invitees), in Malay, Rukun Nasution's work, comprises 41 stanzas from pages 7-13 of the book. At the end, there is a note explaining that the manuscript is secondary or copied. The note reads: "Written in Hajoran Simaninggir on Monday 11-8-1969 and moved to this book 4-4-1996M." (book III, p. 13).
- 3) *Doa/Syair Menjelang Pajar* (Prayers/Poem Toward Dawn), is the work of Rukun Nasution, comprising 23 stanzas from pages 15-18 of the book. No records were found regarding the production of the script.
- 4) *Ende Paingotkon (Reminding Songs)*, in the Mandailing language, is Rukun Nasution's work, comprising 69 stanzas from pages 19-30 of the book. No records were found regarding the production of the script.
- 5) *Pagalak Puasa (Urging to Fast)*, in the Mandailing language, is the work of Rukun Nasution consisting of 54 stanzas from pages 31-39 of the book. There is an indication of the completion of manuscript production towards the end of the verse through stanzas 45-47, reading:

Marsidoaän bata parpudi,

Do'a salamat dua nagori.

Dunia akhbirat dapot mauli,

Martamba iman ditanfiqi.

1405 bilangan taonna,

Dibulan Sya'ban parayak puasa.

27 bilangan arina,

Dijam lima Sabtu goarna.

*Disimanginggir diäri Sabtu,
Ditutup péna dilipat buku.
Saon ma jolo nabisa lalu,
Akkéda iba naburang ilmu.*

Saturday 27 *Sha'ban*, 1405 Hijriyah in verse 46, coincides with 18 May 1985. This is the production date of the original manuscript, not the time of copying it into the corpus on which this study is based.

- 6) *Jangan Salah Mengikut (Do Not Follow Wrongly)*, in Malay, is the work of Rukun Nasution, comprising 47 stanzas from pages 41-48 of the third book. There is no indication regarding the production or reproduction of this verse.

Common Themes and Rhymes

The titles of the poems indicate the central theme of their content. The poems of *Pengajak Sholat*, *Pagalak Puasa*, *Paringgas Manuntut Ilmu*, and *Syair Khobar Qiyamat* list the topics of prayer, fasting, science, and the Day of Judgment. Islamic religious experience is needed to capture the central theme of *Doa/Syair Menjelang Pajar*. The knowledge required regards the obligation to pray at dawn and the related traditions. The other poems, *Jangan Salah Mengikut*, *Ende Paingotkon*, and *Syair Cormin Islam*, carry general titles and do not indicate the focus of their message. It takes at least a quick reading to grasp the essence of the ideas conveyed by these three verses.

Rukun Nasution was relatively consistent in applying the 'aa-aa' rhyme for his poems. Although there are exceptions to the use of the rhyme 'ab-ab,' the number is very small. More details are as follows:

- a. *Syair Cormin Islam*, 26 of 411 stanzas use the ‘*ab-ab*’ rhyme, including stanzas 26, 31, 84, 130, 150, 178, 187, 193, 211, 235, 236, 251, 257, 264, 276, 288, 316, 318, 319, 327, 341, 342, 360, 363, 384, and 401.
- b. *Syair Khobar Qiyamat*, none of the 454 stanzas use the ‘*ab-ab*’ rhyme.
- c. *Paringgas Manuntut Ilmu*, 4 of the 36 stanzas use the ‘*ab-ab*’ rhyme, including stanzas the 2, 8, 27, and 29.
- d. *Syair Pengajak Sholat*, only 3 of the 41 stanzas use the ‘*ab-ab*’ rhyme, including stanzas 2, 16, and 34.
- e. *Doa/Syair Menjelang Pajar* uses no a ‘*ab-ab*’ rhyme.
- f. *Ende Paingotkon*, 12 of 69 stanzas use the ‘*ab-ab*’ rhyme, including stanzas 4, 5, 6, 12, 22, 23, 24, 35, 46, 48, 49, and 59. This is the highest number of verses using the ‘*ab-ab*’ rhyme.
- g. *Pagalak Puasa*, 8 of 54 stanzas use the ‘*ab-ab*’ rhyme, including stanzas 6, 12, 21, 23, 24, 36, 41, and 43.
- h. *Jangan Salah Mengikut*, only 1 of 47 stanzas uses the rhyme ‘*ab-ab*.’ This is seen in the 3rd stanza, while the rest use the ‘*aa-aa*’ rhyme.

Apparently, the corpus of the poem is written on the ‘*aa-aa*’ rhyme, with a few exceptions.

Discussion

Rukun Nasution was born into a family that moved from Panyabungan, Mandailing, and is the fourth generation to become Muslim. This family struggled to be good Muslims, as evidenced by his grandfather and father’s title of ‘*lebai*.’ *Lebai* (Malay-Indonesian) by the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* is defined as the religious administrator of a hamlet. Usually, a *lebai* has certain level of religious knowledge and skills to lead prayers,

Friday sermons, and conduct funeral arrangements. In Hajoran and surrounding areas, this word is often pronounced with *Lobe* as an honorific title in a religious context.

Rukun Nasution only had limited formal education capital. He completed a three-year People's School (*Sekolah Rakyat*) in 1940 with no possibility of continuing to a higher level. However, he consistently attended the *majlis ta'lim* in Hajoran and Langgapayung. The teachers that influenced him the most were Ahmad Syekh Abdurrabbi Siregar, Lukmanul Hakim Nasution, Hasanuddin Siregar, and Aminuddin Siregar. Moreover, Rukun Nasution regularly read the *Bulletin Dakwah*, *Panji Masyarakat*, and *Kiblat* magazine. The availability of reading resources in his area was still limited. His self-taught process made him become a poet.

Rukun Nasution received little formal education because the environment did not provide more than a People's School for three years. Getting a *Sekolah Rakyat* education was also a privilege among his contemporaries because few were as lucky as him. His *Sekolah Rakyat* diploma proved his commitment to education that he carried on throughout his lifetime. The area in which Rukun Nasution was born did not develop rapidly in education. The first public junior high school was established in 1978.²⁷ Asari, the present author, is one of the first public junior high school alumni. This sub-district only had its first public senior high school in 2001.²⁸

Rukun Nasution's biography contains several interesting things including his scientific spirit, a prominent trademark since his childhood. This is clear in his persistence in gaining knowledge in his environment's limited carrying capacity. He was among the few people of his generation that never gave in to the circumstances through his self-discipline and high consistency. The available sources emphasize how much he attached great importance to science. This was manifested in high self-discipline

to increase knowledge with all existing limitations. Rukun Nasution's lifelong loyalty to increase knowledge through *majlis ta'lim* and independent reading is a special privilege. Furthermore, he decided to take a locally based alternative path of non-formal education. The most common alternative was to migrate to other areas to obtain an education. At the beginning of the 20th century, several people from the Sungai Kanan sub-district area and its surroundings continued their education to Babussalam Langkat. There is the center of the famous tarekat founded by Sheikh Abdul Wahab Rakan (d. 1926). Lobe Ibrahim, Rukun Nasution's father, studied at Babussalam Langkat.²⁸ Another area considered the goal of education is Minangkabau, the starting point for reforming Indonesian Islamic education. One of the most important teachers of Rukun Nasution, Ahmad Syekh Abdurrabbi, studied with Sheikh Sulaiman Arrasuli, the founder of Perti from Candung. Since Rukun Nasution could not continue his education outside the region, he optimized the available local options. He made himself educated through *majlis ta'lim* through persistence and consistency. Rukun Nasution developed the tradition of reading, a rare habit in the Hajoran's agrarian society. He read about his hamlet and other sources, such as the national magazine *Panji Masyarakat* and *Kiblat* published in Jakarta. Furthermore, Rukun Nasution regularly subscribed to the *Bulletin Dakwah*, though it was always late. His decision to write poetry seems is very interesting because becoming a poet requires adequate knowledge and good education. Therefore, being a poet with limited educational capital is an achievement. His teachers, Syekh Abdurrabbi, Hasanuddin Siregar, Lukman Hakim Nasution, and Aminuddin Siregar left no writings. They had a much better education, but they focused more on oral than written discourse. Former studies²⁹ showed that Malay Islamic scholars-poets received a good formal education, with some getting additional education in the Middle East.

Rukun Nasution's corpus must be seen as significant based on its surrounding internal and external contexts. He left five self-composed poems, including *Syair Pengajak Sholat*, *Doa/Syair Menjelang Pajar*, *Ende Paingotkon*, *Pagalak Puasa*, and *Jangan Salah Mengikut*; translations from Malay into Mandailing language two titles, including *Syair Cormin Islam* and *Paringgas Manuntut Ilmu*; and a transcription from Arabic-Malay script to Latin script, *Syair Khobar Qiyamat*. These variations represent different processes and levels of creativity. Composing and producing original work is more difficult than translating. This requires adequate linguistic knowledge and competence, especially since he wrote in poetry. Furthermore, it requires high-level vocabulary to accommodate the rhyming 'aa-aa.' Composing poetry requires creativity, linguistic competence, and flexibility in choosing diction. Also, translating demands mastery of the content substance and competence of the original language (Malay) and the target language (Mandailing). Differences in language characteristics are a challenge in this regard. It is difficult to find Islamic information written in the Mandailing language, as experts observe, such as Abbas Pulungan and Haidar Putra Daulay. Rukun Nasution's last group of works, Transliteration, is arguably less intellectually and linguistically challenging than the first two groups. However, the activity requires high commitment and discipline.

Rukun Nasution's poems consistently use the 'aa-aa' rhyme, with only a few exceptions. This shows his high ability to select words and build phrases and sentences, making up his poems. Furthermore, he arranged verse by stanza to deliver the ideas and messages following a certain sequence. Religious information is the general substance of Rukun Nasution's poems, consistent with his background relying on *majlis ta'lim* and self-study. Also, his readings revolve around periodicals with Islamic themes.

This study did not conduct an in-depth analysis of the poetry content. Therefore, this corpus of poetry needs further studies to map and analyze its content. Content analysis-based studies are suggested to understand Rukun Nasution better, his thoughts through poetry, and his real contribution to science and society.

Conclusions

Rukun Nasution was unique and interesting, and his commitment to science and education transcends his time and place of birth. He is attractive because of his ability to maximize the potential around him, educate himself, carve out extraordinary accomplishments, and become a poet. Rukun Nasution was not subject to the spatial and temporal constraints of the historicity of his life. Conversely, his corpus poems show that he is not a passive recipient of knowledge. He was a creative person that processed his lessons into writing products.

Rukun Nasution's option to write in the poetry genre is added to his achievements because it requires special competence in linguistics. His works show a good mastery of religious knowledge, linguistic competence, and an extraordinary sense of language. His life and works present a strong life lesson: you do not need to have high formal education to write. Further studies should analyze Rukun Nasution's poetry more deeply considering its unique corpus in the realm of thought and the cultural environment.

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¹⁹ Syahrin Harahap, *Metodologi Studi Tokoh & Penulisan Biografi* (Jakarta: Prenada, 2014).

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²¹ Hasan Asari, "Syaikh H. Sulaiman Arrasuli (1871-1970) Dan Dinamika Intelektual Indonesia Abad Ke-20," in *Terbuai Dalam Studi Sejarah Dan Pembaruan Pendidikan Islam*, ed. Asnil Aidah Ritonga and Marliyah (Citapustaka Media, 2010), 75-84.

²² The rubber is tapped three to four times a week, usually in the morning. The thickened sap in the holding bowl is collected into a larger bucket to form lumps weighing 10-20 kg. The sap is sold to collectors on Wednesday from afternoon to evening. This rhythm is related to the weekly market schedule in Langgapayung, which falls on Thursday. Generally, residents shop for family needs weekly.

²³ The raft to carry the sap is made of bamboo widely available on the banks of the Kanan River. Three bamboo strands are lined up about half a meter apart and connected by wooden pegs. The sap lumps are pierced and strung together with rope or rattan to form elongated strands. Two strands of sap are tied to each bamboo strand. Therefore, the raft forms six rows of sap held together by three pieces of bamboo as ribs. The length of the raft varies from about 10 to 30 meters, depending on the amount of sap to be carried. Although the Kanan River is not very fast, it has twists and narrows between Hajoran and Langgapayung. These natural conditions determine the difficulty of carrying the raft and become a consideration in determining its length in one departure. Becoming a rubber raft guide is a special skill practiced by only a few people because it requires good knowledge of the currents, depths, and the flows of Kanan River. Moreover, the raft guide requires courage because the path has deep river sections called *lubuk*, usually inhabited by crocodiles. Frequently the raft guide must spend the night on the raft.

²⁴ In the cultural tradition of Hajoran Village and its surroundings, the clan 'Nasution' is usually abbreviated as 'Nst,' 'Nast,' or 'Nasty.' However, writing the initials of a name regarding the sound of 'Er' instead of 'R' is unusual, unique, and untraceable.

²⁵ Kemdikbud Data Referensi, "UPTD. SMP Negeri 1 Sungai Kanan," Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan RI, n.d.

²⁶ Kemdikbud Data Referensi, "SMA NEGERI 1 Sungai Kanan," Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan RI, n.d.

²⁷ Hasan Asari, "Prof. Dr. Hasan Asari Nasution, MA: Sketsa Kehidupan, Sejauh

Ini,” in *Pendidikan Islam Dalam Buaian Sejarah*, ed. Asnil Aidah Ritonga (Bandung: Citapustaka, 2008), 4.

²⁸ Braginsky, *Yang Indah, Berfaedah Dan Kamal: Sejarah Sastra Melayu Dalam Abad 7-19*; Chambert-Loir, *Sadur: Sejarah Terjemahan Di Indonesia Dan Malaysia*; Ilyas, *Warisan Intelektual Ulama Nusantara: Tokoh, Karya, Dan Pemikiran*; Syahnan, “Nahdlatul Ulama Scholar in Mandailing Land: A Biography of Shaykh Ali Hasan Ahmad Ad-Dary”; Butar-butar, *Mengenal Karya-Karya Ilmu Falak Nusantara: Transmisi, Anotasi, Dan Biografi*; Dahlan, “THE INTELLECTUAL TRADITION OF MANDAILING ULAMA IN EAST SUMATRA/ : Zainal Arifin Abbas , 1912-1979.”