

Legitimizing Islam as “rahmatan lil’ al’amiin”: Agency and Habitus in the Production of Recent Indonesian Islamic Novel Assalamualaikum Beijing

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Abstract: This article examines the core Islamic values as a part of the Islamic discourse of the novel Assalamualaikum Beijing production. The theoretical agency and habitus of Pierre Bourdieu suggest that if the novel promoted the core values of Islam for harmonizing the sensitive issues in Indonesia, then the agency interpretive schemes as spaces of creativity in producing the novel should also be understood. Using the slogan “Islam rahmatan lil’ al’amin” is a mercy for the whole life in-universe. The article argued that such narratives form a crucial part of legitimate Islamic rule in the present day. Specifically in Indonesia, the novel emphasizes the Islamic role in providing moral authority and guidance for the general public, specifically on women's existence and gender relations, modern human lifestyles, and the relation of Islam and China.

Keywords: Agency, Bourdieu, Habitus, Islam, Sociology, Islamic literature

1. Introduction

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Indonesian literature was characterized by the resurgence of romantic-Islamic novels that internalize Islamic discourse as one of the most successful and pervasive in Islam's spread. “Islam rahmatan lil’ al’amiin” is a crucial rationale behind the developing trajectory of Islamic discourse that has been established and maintained the Islamic way of life legitimacy; Islam is the mercy for all in the universe. Let's say, novels like; *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* (2004), *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* (2007), *99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa* (2014) *Bulan Terbelah di Langit Amerika* (2014), *Surga yang Tak Dirindukan* (2015), and *Assalamualaikum Beijing* (2013) are intersecting Islamic values with the recent sensitive issues related to reality such as polygami, different religious marital, gender relation, and intercultural relationship. Naisbitt argued that "When society is battered by rapid social change, the need for spiritual things got intensification (Hasbullah, 2007b)." Vatikiotis added that there had been symptoms of widespread social dislocation that have afflicted a rapidly changing society. Many people then return to their religion to assert themselves in reaction to the breakdown of the traditional social, moral values order that occurs around them (Pho, 1997). For example, the rapid social change and economic development resulting in the secularization of culture in Indonesia and has pushed the people back to religious devotion. They return to the intensity of religion; they "shape themselves" into a platform of social class. Various social codes form a collective identity; language, religion, and ideology (Rao, 1999)—connecting to sensitive issues like marital, women's emancipation, and nationality to reenact Islam as the mercy for the universe.

The intensification of religion in Indonesian literature in the present day is considered explicitly as a response to the abundance of literary works that reveal sex-themed and eroticism of what so-called "satrawangi" (Ghazali, 2019) as well as a foreign novel that dominate the market and bookstore stalls. Those novels are quite unbearable for parents, teachers, and cultural activists (Adi, 2008) since they could negatively affect Indonesian readers, particularly teenage or school year students. However, in the larger context, the intensification of religion has become a part of identity politics marked by two things. First is the ambivalence of democracy which upholds the freedom to be the foundation for every individual in actualizing himself. However, that freedom ultimately widens the gap between identity (especially in religion, Ethnicity, and gender range) in Indonesia.

Second, the emergence of the presence of the Muslim middle class as a new socio-economic middle class broadly dominated by Muslims residing in urban areas (Magazine, 1984). This Muslim social class forms a social identity including religious identity, class, race, Ethnicity, and gender, which determine an individual's position in his or her social relationships or interactions. In addition, the social class of Muslims is also a political identity including nationality and citizenship, which this political identity determines the position of individuals in a community through a sense of belonging and at the same time mark the part of other subjects in the sense of otherness (Harahap, 2014). The political issue of identity is then more intended as a political tool to seek and legitimize power. The increasing process of Islamization, the emergence of a Muslim middle class, increasing involvement of Muslims in politics, and privatization of the media, supported by freedom of expression in Indonesia since the post-New Order era (Hoesterey & Clark, 2012), are strengthening Muslim social classes in legitimizing their power.

In Indonesian literature, Islamic-themed has been an inseparable discourse in the entire history of Indonesian literature since its inception. Even before modern Indonesian literature existed after using Indonesian as a unifying language was formally recognized at the 1928 Indonesian Youth Congress (Hoesterey & Clark, 2012). Jassin, the Pope of Indonesian literature, had defined a specific literary genre during an early period. The definition refers not only to the religious background of the writers but specifically to the content in which should be exhibited the authors the religious ideas and the literary quality of their works (Muniroch, 2014). Hamka as a prominent Indonesian Muslim writer and Islamic leader, emphasizes the differences between orthodox Sufi's beliefs and non-orthodox teachings in his parameters on Islamic literature (Mohd Shahrizal & Rahmah, 2011).

Meanwhile, Emha Ainun Nadjib, a younger Indonesian Muslim writer, distinguishes between "Islamic literature," which refers to the works of Muslim writers, and "Islamic-themed literature," which includes the works of non-Muslim writers (Mohd Shahrizal & Rahmah, 2011). Emha clarified Islamic literature by emphasizing more on people who write literary works. This definition represents the idea that Islamic literature illuminates the religious insights of a writer's inner thoughts, and only Muslim writers can deeply absorb the spirit of Islam. Whereas Islamic-themed literature calls for the idea of Islam, it can be done by anyone who experiences and connected her/himself with Islam. Musa concluded that Islamic literature is literature inspired by the broad concept of Islamic art based on Islamic beliefs and behavior that emphasizes truth more than the aesthetic quality of literature. It must present a favorable impression and emphasize goodness (*ma'ruf*) and Islamic principles (Musa, 2012).

Thus, this article examines the core Islamic values as one of the most fundamental and pervasive truths within the Islamic discourse in *Assalamualaikum Beijing*, a novel by Asma Nadia. She is positioned as a Muslim writer in the field of recent Indonesian popular literature. An overview of Islamic discourse followed by a closer look at the "Islam *rahmatan Lil Alamin*" maxim shows how Islam becomes habitus or schematic interpretation in the production of the novel and the role of the author in the agency. This analysis is fundamental in dealing with sort social class of the author and her agency if connecting it the sociopolitical and cultural developments, such as in screening women existence and gender relation, human lifestyle, and the relation of China and Islam in the present day. After all, there have always been images of women that challenge and subvert the (Western) feminist and Islamic views of women's emancipation. Ideas of human lifestyle that challenge and subvert modern perspective, and images of the relation of China and Islam that challenge and subvert the widespread labeling of "difference." By seeing these three cases, this article shows that *Assalamualaikum Beijing's* novel selectively promotes so-called Islamic values that contribute to the overall women and gender, lifestyles, and Chinese issues in Indonesia. The actual campaign on the ground thus offers a unique insight into how the novel romanticizes and harmonizes the Islamic-patriarchal rule, feminist ideas, and modern life. To construct a moral narrative around the Islamic tradition, allowing the novel to emphasize its role in providing moral authority and guidance for public life.

2. Research Methods

This study used a qualitative descriptive approach focusing on content analysis in the form of textual analysis, which was approached through Bourdieu's sociological theory. A qualitative descriptive approach is an approach in research whose analysis is as words as quotes and does not involve statistics (Arikunto, 2010: 3). Meanwhile, content analysis is a data analysis method that focuses on a text by applying text interpretation. Eriyanto (2015: 15) explains at length that quantitative content analysis is a scientific research technique intended to describe the characteristics of the content and draw inferences from the range. The content analysis aims to identify manifest communication systematically and carried out objectively, validly, reliably, and replicated. In literary research, content analysis, according to Endraswara (2004: 161), is a strategy to capture the message of literary works. In analyzing the message of academic work, it has a theoretical basis for analyzing the text of the work.

2.1. Statistical Techniques

The data collection technique in this study is guided by the data collection cycle proposed by Cresswell (2010). The process in question is that data collection starts from collecting information by reading, recording, cataloging, classifying, documenting it in files with words, connecting with theory, arranging, and ensuring that it can achieve research objectives.

2.2. Data Analysis

The data analysis product in this study refers to the content analysis technique with the sociology of literature approach developed by Bourdieu. The data analysis steps are: 1) Interpret the classified data based on the sub-focus in this study by examining the text from *the bottom-to-top, top-to-down, back-to-forth, forth-to-back*, all of which are called hermeneutic circles. 2) Analyzing all the structural elements of the novel to explain the commodification in the text of the novel *Assalamualaikum Beijing* 3) Analyzing the habitus that surrounds the novel; 4) describe the capital used by the author in novel production and as a construction site for agents in the

novel Assalamualaikum Beijing. 5) Analyze the symbolic power built by the author, which directs the understanding to the point of view regarding truth and belief; 5) conclude the results of the analysis based on the problem and research objectives. 6) The last step is to compile a report as the result of the research

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Bourdieu and the Concept of Agency and Habitus

Since literary work is considered a reflection of social reality, it is assumed that literary works are not born in a socio-cultural vacuum and literary works can be viewed as message (Turmuzi et al., 2018). And literature has three elements, namely tension, curiosity, and challenge (Binti et al., 2021). They always have dialogues with the reality of life, such as social class, cultural background, the landscape of politics, economics, and even popular tastes. Literature is then understood as not simply a reflection to convey a message but a construction that contains subjective and objective dimensions (Hughes, n.d.). As an agent, the author chooses reality and characters, sources, and events to be displayed in their literary works, so s/he determines how the reader understands an event or reality in a particular outlook. As explained above, construction deeds are related to the arena or field of literary, cultural production (Bourdieu, 1993). Bourdieu explains that the arena or area of literary, cultural production, a social practice (Bourdieu, 1993), is not concerned with only one aspect but many aspects. Two of them are agency and habitus. Habitus was pondered as a schematic interpretation in the production of literary work. At the same time, the agency is the process that each individual is equipped to understand and control their actions based on the conditions in which the individual lives, often related to intentionality and individuality (Bourdieu, 1993). In other words, if the agent refers to individuals, agency refers to the individual's abilities in linking its relation to social structure. Social structure is understood in two dimensions, the *objective structure*—the structure displayed in social networks, and *subjective structures*—the systems that lie inside and work within the individual.

Bourdieu emphasized the relation between agency *vis a dialectical vis structure*. As part of the structure of society, the agent is impossible to deny the conditions that exist in the objective structure, which, for example, regulates how to behave, speak and look and understand the world. At this stage, the working principle is the internalization of externalities, namely when external and objective things are internalized through the arena to the agent. However, at the same time, the agent also has a subjective structure related to its habitus. At this stage, the working principle is the externalization of internalities—the moment a subjective thing of externalized. Agents are passive individuals who comply with and affirm their objective structures and can do agency; With its subjective structure, an agent can subvert its accurate structure.

Bourdieu describes habitus as a mental structure that forms interpretation schemes of a problem that occurs in society in a literary work (Umanailo, 2018). Bourdieu argued that habitus is a system through a combination of objective and subjective, historical structures, personal, lasting, and changing dispositions that serve as a generative basis for objectively structured and integrated practices. Habitus is an interpretive scheme, unconsciously and placed deep in the mind (Umanailo, 2018). Habitus leads every person to how the world works, how to evaluate things, and how to control actions. Bourdieu emphasized that individuals are guided in their efforts by interpretive schemes. Habitus could allow individuals or groups to adjust to a new situation.

However, habitus is an intermediate construction, not a determinative one: it still provides the creative role of actors to improvise, unrestricted, and autonomous; the habitus becomes the basis for driving action and thought, which combines dispositions as the tendency of attitudes and generative classification schemes as a basis for assessment. Thus, the habitus is a system of practice production schemes and a schematic design of perception and appreciation of practice (Bourdieu, 2011). At this stage, the habitus is linked to principles of construction and evaluation, which are very basic to the social world.

As with Indonesian literary criticism, Indonesian literary studies have been working on Islam and its values based on the sociology perspectives, but limited seeing how agency and habitus interplay in the production of Islamic novels. The author's background determines mental structure; class, gender, age select the selection of reality, characters, setting, and theme in the novels to hint at the reader's understanding of a particular spectacle. Thus, the theoretical approach of this article is underpinned by Bourdieu's agency and habitus to exhaust the cultural production of the novel Assalamualaikum Beijing that denotes through women existence and gender relations, human lifestyles, and cultural hybridity emphasizing Islam as *rahmatan al Alamin*. An author does agency in such issues to legitimate Islam as an ideology that perfectly rules human life in the contemporary complex life.

3.2 Cultural Representation of Muslim Writer Class in the Recent Indonesia Literature Arena

A perspective represented by the author in the novel is Islam as *rahmatan Lil Alamein*. It is explicitly depicted in *Assalamualaikum Beijing* novel that "*Islam itu rahmatan lil alamin, hanya kebaikan dan kebaikan*" (Nadia,

2019). Rahmatan Lil Alamin means mercy to all of God's creation. The concept is legitimated to the idea that Islam is the religion committed to pluralism, humanism, dialogical, and tolerance, explicitly dealing with women and gender relations, modern lifestyles, and cultural negotiation cases.

From Bourdieu's framework, we will see three Islamic phenomena represented in the novel *Assalamualaikum Beijing* which serves as a cultural presentation of famous Muslim authors in Indonesian literature in the early twenty-first century. The three phenomena are: (1) the intersection of Islamic and feminist values as a reinforcement of modern Muslim class identity, (2) the application of Islamic values in modern lifestyle, and (3) the depiction of Islamic and Chinese cultural hybrids as a form cultural negotiation. Three phenomena are seen as evidence of the rise of religious expression or the promotion of Islam in the early twenty-first century. However, Bourdieu called "cultural reproduction" a productive social investment that continuously accumulated and then confirmed the formation of a new class identity embodied in the genre of Islamic literature in the contemporary era.

3.3 The construction of Women and gender roles

The novel *Assalamualaikum Beijing* presents two main female characters with different characterizations. Both show contradictory when associated with the idealization of women in feminism and Islam. From both characters, the author indicated that the figure of Asma is an ideal figure that should be possessed by women today.

The strand depicting Asma as a hijabi, educated, and independent woman, and Anita, as Western-look, fashionable, high-educated, and public worker, presents a view of feminism and conservative Islamism under attack. Paradoxically, Asma and Anita can be considered the embodiment of women's subversive discourse in Indonesia's Muslim Javanese patriarchal system and radical feminism. Asma is depicted as an educated and independent woman (Hakim, 2012). She described it traveled to Beijing alone and working as a columnist of a travel magazine in Beijing. The following excerpt has depicted the profile of Asma in the novel.

Jilbab warna cerahnya tertiuip angin kencang yang menembuskan hawa dingin November. Jauh dari suhu di Hong Kong beberapa jam lalu yang dingin, tetapi tidak sampai menimbulkan kebas hingga sulit menggerakkan bibir, memaksa gadis itu merapatkan jaket tebalnya.

"Jangan Khawatir, China setelah olimpiade maju kok. Pasti banyak yang bisa bahasa Inggris!" (Nadia, 2019)

There are three clues to explain the subversion of women's discourse in the Muslim (Javanese) patriarchal system and feminism in the excerpt, the hijab, a woman traveling, and the English language. Hijab is a kind of clothing to cover the female genitalia, particularly from the sight of men who are not considered as 'mahram' in society in the form of headscarves or veils. The hijab law is obligatory (Nadia, 2019) for Muslim women as a form of obedience to God (Allah) and glory. Since the function of Jilbab or hijab is to cover women's bodies, feminist scholars suppose it is a restriction for women because it is not applied to men. Fatimah Mernissi, one of the Moroccan-born Muslim feminists, argued that the prescription of hijab, genealogically, is merely to distinguish between independent women and slaves. In the case now there are no slaves, then there is no need for hijab sharia. For Mernisi, the tradition of the hijab has nothing to do with the purity and glory of women. That hijab is a manifestation of the decline of social attitudes for women (Asyadily, 2019). However, *Assalamualaikum Beijing* seems to stand for Hijab or Jilbab as the compulsory outfit for Muslim women by showing that Jilbab is not a setback or confinement for women. Asma, in this novel, is depicted wearing the hijab, and she unrestrictedly travels abroad for work. With her excellent performance in work, she deserves an independent figure in the social and economic sectors. English proficiency she performs also supports the characterization of Asma as a more up-to-date and advanced woman in the era. Hasbullah said that inspired by the Iranian Islamic Revolution that erupted in 1979 psychologically raised the self-esteem of Muslims in the eyes of the world, especially in the West. Muslimah clothing marked with hijab or hijab is a form of affirmation of Muslim identity and as the first prominent feature in the presence of the Muslim middle class in Indonesia is marked by the emergence of Muslimah clothing (veil) among Muslim women who have appeared since the early 1980s (Hasbullah, 2007a).

Asma walks without restraint to Beijing with her hijab asserted that the hijab does not restrict a woman's ability or activity. She can go to work and found her future husband. Her hijab depicted her as particular and individual. It is emphasized that the hijab is not only a matter of security but also related to self-identity. Nadiya Takolia, a Guardian column publicist who adopted the hijab after delving into feminism, remarks:

It is not about protection from men's lusts. I am the one telling the world that my femininity is not available for public consumption. I am taking control of it, and I do not want to be part of a system that reduces and demeans women. (Sadar, 2015)

In contrast to religious novels in previous periods, women were commonly depicted as the stereotypical portrayal of women as passive, inexpressive, and dependent. Women with attributes like Jilbab often refer to backward and subordinate images (Hakim, 2012). Novels like *Salah Asuhan* (1928) depicts a leading female character, Aminah as an ideal woman in religious view but backward and subordinate, *Di bawah Lindungan Kaabah* (1938) depicts a helpless female character, Zainab, after being left by Hamid, her husband, and *Robohnya Surau Kami*, (1956). However, it did not talk about female figures, the image of Garin Tua, who is devout in worship but silly, lacking rationality. So, it could be argued that the close association between Asma is perhaps the point at which *Assalamualaikum Beijing* most successfully resists conservative Islamism in seeing women's independence, in particular the context of the Javanese patriarchal system (Brenner, 2012).

In contrast to Asma, Anita is presented as a good-looking woman, a fashionable, educated woman, and performance excellence in office in this novel. This depiction is in the first fulfilling the idealization of women in the eyes of feminism but is then faintly presented in the novel. Anita was depicted seducing a man and committed adultery in the 'forbidden love' that resulted in an unwanted infant's birth. Anita's depiction initially is independent and emancipated, turned to become a docile woman after marriage. He stopped working and focused on taking care of the household. She faced repeated neglect from her husband. She transformed herself into a submissive and subordinate woman who was afraid of her husband and served him wholeheartedly even though she was in the agony of neglect.

The representation of Anita so far is how the author was subverting the ideal figure of women in the feminist view. In representation of previous feminist novels in Indonesia, such as Ayu Utami's *Saman* (1996) or Djenar Mahesa Ayu's; collective short stories *Jangan main-main dengan kelaminmu* (2004), female characters are constructed as independent, educated, and opt to be unmarried women but committed to 'forbidden love' such as seducing other's husband and committed sin with others men or became a lesbian. For Asma Nadia, this is detrimental to women, as Anita, an independent and educated figure who cannot control herself in her relationships. The point is that the choice to be independent and unmarried women in most feminist novels presentation by Asma Nadia in *Assalamualaikum Beijing* is ultimately vulnerable to illegal relationships that bring disaster to women's lives.

So, what are women have to do with women in the present century? The author presents Asma that adapting the feminist ideal image and Islamic rules to fulfill what is meant to be both Muslim and woman in the current decade. It subverts the very constructions of categories such as feminism and religion. By escaping the ideal figure of feminist and conservative Islamism, Asma presents a rebellion on both models by intersecting the idea of feminism on how to be independent and traditional Islamic view on how to be adapt to Islamic rules in her life. The author presents asma's character as an illustration that being an independent woman does not mean to contradict religious values; on the contrary, both can go hand in hand. Lukman Hakim remarks that the portrayal of Muslim women in recent literature and film is dominantly well-educated and emancipated. It can be considered the representation of post-traditional Islam feminists, which seeks to re-interpret Islamic teachings, contemporary social realities, and traditions (Hakim, 2012).

The other strand of the novel depicts the relationship between men and women constructed gender relation. First, The relationship between Zhongwen and Asma and Anita and Dewa plays an essential role in formulating gender roles and relationships stigma of human difference in this novel. Asma (a) is depicted as independent, but on the other occasion, she appears fragile, and half of her life is under her husband, Zhongwen, surveillance. Likewise, Zhongwen looks fragile and dominated as she changed his faith to Islam to marry Asma and leave his family. However, he also has power over Asma's body and freedom because Asma's illness makes Zhongwen a significant role in Asma's survival. Second, the relationship between Anita and Dewa shows the same ambiguous pattern. Anita looks dominated by Dewa, her husband, but she also looks solid and resilient in facing life's pressures. Dewa is also depicted the same; he seems to dominate Anita but also is dominated by Asma.

The two patterns of the relationship between men and women indicated that gender relation in various conditions has different modes. The author seems to refuse to generalize or equate women's problems for all life contexts but sees individuals as fragmented. Thus, it can be understood that the *Assalamualaikum Beijing* film is a representation of the Islamic feminism movement, which tries to deconstruct the views of fundamentalist Muslims who subordinate women to their relationships with men. Both in the realms of education, politics, economics, social, and the domestic space, by still basing on religious rationality contextualized with contemporary social realities and local traditions. This film also offers a reconstruction of the movements and thoughts of Western feminism that refer to social bases and pure rationality.

Lubis admits that women in this era are very prominent. The rapid advancement of information technology cannot be separated from the existence of women (Lubis, 2006). In the business and managerial fields, for example, there have been quite drastic changes and shifts. Many positions that men previously dominated have

now begun to shift and are occupied by women. It happens in highly developed countries and newly industrialized countries, even in developing countries like Indonesia. The 21st century is the century of women and families because women will fight as a play. However, there is something negative behind women's achievements in this era, namely that the moral and spiritual life (spirituality) is currently being neglected (Wirosardjono, 1995). Abundant material, which is obsessed and became a measure of success in modern life, actually turns against women. Scientific knowledge and rational efficiency are clearly defined goals in the world of work and life for women. However, religious sense periodically and gradually begins to be suppressed, publicly ridiculed, and perhaps even criticized and humiliated (Rinaldo, 2008).

3.4 The representation of the rule of Islam in modern human lifestyle

The core Islamic values in the novel are firmly attached to everyday human life in providing moral authority and guidance for the general public. First, representing Islamic ethics towards the intimate relation of man and woman, namely refuse to date and shaking hands with the opposite sex. The novel illustrates that:

Melalui perenungan panjang, dia pun sampai pada keputusan untuk menjaga diri lebih baik. Mulai mengenakan jilbab, walaupun tak sepanjang Sekar. Asma juga mulai belajar mengikuti prinsip suami sahabatnya. Tidak bersalaman atau bersentuhan dengan lelaki, kecuali keluarga, dan tidak lagi pacaran. Tidak peduli jika menjadi perbincangan di kantor. Asma menerimanya sebagai tantangan baru. Islam itu rahmatan lil 'alamin, hanya kebaikan dan kebaikan. Dan, jejak kebaikan tidak mungkin hilang hanya gara-gara dia menolak bersalaman. Mama yang melihatnya bertambah khawatir. "Bagaimana bisa bertemu jodoh jika kamu berjilbab dan sekarang tidak mau pacaran?" Sebagai jawaban, hanya ciuman di kening dan pipi kiri kanan yang diberikannya pada Mama. Jangan khawatir, Ma. Cinta itu menjaga, tergesa-gesa itu nafsu belaka. Mas Ridwan menikah dengan Sekar, itu bukti (Nadia, 2019).

Other than the hijab, as already explained in the previous sub-heading, the quote depicts the core Islamic values related to the intimate relation of man and woman, not dating and refuse to shake hands with the opposite sex. The two cases are not restricting human sovereignty to respect each other, but even instead humanized, liberalized, and noble. These clues are the basis of prophetic literature (Kuntowijoyo, 2005), such as command the good and forbid the bad (*ma'ruf*), Islam prevents evil and the manifestation of faith. Refusing to shake hands and "dating is haram" is not limiting one-self or breaking friendship but rather as a norm and self-respect managed in religious guidelines. It indicated that illicit relationships often start from shaking hands with the opposite sex and leading to dating that ends in illicit sexual relationships. In Islam, an illicit sexual relationship is prohibited and has a painful reward in life hereafter because it contained evils that harm human beings.

The solution that offered by Islam to mediate intimate relationship among man and woman is *ta'aruf*. *Taurus* is an introductory process to the stage of marriage in Islam rule (Arham, 2017), while courtship is generally to get to know man and woman, which was not initially based on a commitment to marry. Even courtship is not modulated with uncontrolled sex motives. In *Assalamualaikum Beijing*, true and courtship (pacaran) coined through the following expression:

Dalam Islam nggak ada kamus pedekate tanpa niat menikah. Cinta memang harus dibuktikan, tapi ini tidak boleh jadi alasan pacarmu meminta lebih dari apa yang diperbolehkan dalam agama (Nadia, 2019).

"ada taaruf, proses pengenalan. Sebagai muslimah kita boleh bertanya apa saja untuk menjajaki kesamaan visi, dan melihat apakah ada hal-hal yang akan menimbulkan rasa saying" (Nadia, 2019)

Love must be proven, but it should not be the reason for asking more, particularly sex before marriage, as what is allowed in religion. That is why there is no dating without married in Islam. *Taurus* was made for humanity, to respect human dignity. This clue is seemed to criticizing the social life of phenomena of courtship among young generations these days. *Assalamualaikum Beijing* represents a story of a high school student girl who falls into depression because her boyfriend left her. However, they already perceived the intimate relation of husband and wife alike. There is also a girl found dead-naked in a ditch, the story about a missing beautiful student who was found dead in her car. All these cases are put in the novel to justify that dating and courtship are worthless, while the religious norm is salvation. Dissemination of Islamic values about true love depicts in the chapter entitled 'Cinta Tak Tergesa' (love is not hustled), but love is guarding. Hustled is lust (Nadia, 2019).

Another depiction to legitimate the core Islamic values as *rahmatan Lil Alamin* is Asma's effort, and her family, to healing from her illness. Besides taking medical treatment, she also alternatively prayed to God. Asma depicts it in her novel:

"Doa selalu menenangkan dan memberikan harapan," ujar Asma saat menerima kertas berisi catatan doa yang telah difotokopi sahabatnya.

Bismillahisy syafi, bismilahil kafi, bismillahil mu'afi, bismillahi ladzi lan yadurru ma'asmihi syai'un fil ardi wa la fis sama'I wa huwas sami'ul 'alim. "Dengan nama Allah Tuhan yang menyembuhkan. Dengan nama Allah Tuhan yang mencukupkan. Dengan nama Allah yang dengan nama-Nya tidak ada sesuatu pun yang berbahaya baik di bumi maupun di langit. Dan, Dia adalah Tuhan yang Maha Mendengar lagi Maha Mengetahui" (Nadia, 2019).

The other prayer expressed is "Inni massaniyad durru wanta arhamur rahimiin. "Sesungguhnya aku telah ditimpa penyakit dan Engkau adalah Tuhan yang maha penyayang." (Nadia, 2019).

As a part of contemporary Islamic novel, *Assalamualaikum Beijing* presents *doa* as a path to healing from sickness, is not to oppose the advanced medical traditions but to be carried out simultaneously. Medical treatment is done to heal the wound physically, and *doa* is done to heal mental syndrome otherwise. *Doa* contains the meaning of hope as well as devotion and piety to God. Devotion to God's will imply to peace of mind. There is a transcendent space that appears in these prayers beyond what is visible, which can be found in the universe.

It can be summed that the author presents Islamic values on the social ethic in modern human lifestyle by offering an alternative way to solve human problems in contemporary life stile by asserting Islamic values as a solution. As a contemporary Muslim writer, Asma Nadia was grounded by Islamic 'habitus' in looking at the socio-cultural processes of the formation of Islamic literature, particularly in intersecting Islamic values in contemporary modern human lifestyles. Islamic habitus, as Bourdieu argued, leads the author to see the world, evaluate things, and control actions. Thus, as the author, Islam has been letting Asma Nadia adjust to modern human lifestyles problems and bring Islam, not in opposition but a balance of modern contemporary societal life.

3.5 The representation of Islamic and Chinese cultural hybridity

"*Carilah ilmu sampai ke negeri China*" is a popular maxim in Islam that quoted from the Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet urges Muslims to seek knowledge even as far as China. This asserted that Muslims could learn something from China and China and may get the same from Islam. This interchangeable relation can not only lead to getting superior knowledge but also make cultural hybridity.

The depiction of the Great Xi'an and Niujie Mosques is another noticeable point in this novel. Through Zhongwen, a Chinese man who lives in the Xi'an, the capital city of Shaanxi, the author draws energy about the penetration of Islam in China's culture. In the novel, the city of Xi'an is depicted as inhabited by a majority of the Muslim population that well-known as Hui Min Jie. Historically, Hui people are Han people, Persians, and Arabs since the Tang Dynasty. Today Hui Min Jie becomes the icon of Islam in China and becomes the destination of tourist who intends to experience the life of Islam in China that has been built in the past (Huimin Jie, 2019).

As the oldest and the largest Mosque in China, the Great Mosque of Xi'an is presented in this novel to display the critical relation between Arab-Persian and China in the past. The novel reviews that Xi'an Mosque used as a preaching place by Persians and Arabs who sailed from the silk route and settled in several cities such as Guangzhou, Quanzhou, Hangzhou, Yangzhou, and Chang'an (Xi'an) (Nadia, 2019). The arrival of Persians and Arabs in the past spread off Islam; they have shaped the hybrid culture, as shown in the architecture of the Xi'an mosque. The novels remarks:

The Mosque architecture combines the same structure as traditional Chinese wooden houses but is combined with Arabic nuances. Unlike in other old Chinese buildings full of paintings or carvings of dragons, tigers, or other animals, and humans fill the ornaments, they do not find it in Niujie. (Nadia, 2019).

The construct of the Great Xi'an mosque, which does not resemble the mosques in the Middle East or other Muslim countries, like Indonesia, but adopts the construction and architecture of Chinese temples, shows how both Islamic and Chinese cultural values merge and form hybridization. In the Mosque, the Chinese architect is adopted but eliminated painting, dragon, tiger, or other animal or human carvings. The living creature is Islam called *ash shurah* (Nadia, 2019). Hadith explained by Ibn Abbas that the *ash shurah* is prohibited from being crafted since it is supposed to be a means of evils. However, the image of a lifeless creature like a tree is allowable. *Assalamualaikum Beijing* brings Chinese-style mosques to provide a new model for multi-ethnic and multi-religious coexistence. Weng affirmed that Being 'more Muslim' does not necessarily mean being inward-looking and losing your cultural traditions. Being 'more Chinese' does not necessarily imply being exclusive and losing your local affiliations. Shared by both Muslims and non-Muslims, Chinese and non-Chinese, Chinese Muslim cultures open more social interactions and boundary crossings (Hew, 2017). Chinese Muslim cultural identities, especially as manifested in their mosques, promote religious and ethnic diversity (Hew, 2017).

On the other occasion, the novel portrayed Niuhie Mosque. Although the Mosque does not represent the Chinese-style Mosque, it illustrates how Islam is accepted in China. Zhongwen demonstrates that he witnessed the old Chinese man and woman in the courtyard of the Niujie Mosque declared to be Muslims in the public eyes.

There is sincerity and simplicity from simple scenes, but somehow it touches Zongwen's inner space (Nadia, 2019). By presenting the Chinese people declaring to be Muslim in public eyes without pressure or intimidated, the novel intends to neglect the image of Islam as intolerance and radical in widespread labeling in the decade.

A further depiction that promoted religious and Chinese stuff in the *Assalamualaikum Beijing* is the myth of Ashima and Ahei from Yunan. Yunan historically has had major Muslim influences, though Muslims comprise only 2% of the population in the province. Asma is the leading character in the novel attached as Ashima by Zhongwen. When Zhongwen met Asma on the bus for the first time, he remembered Yunan's legend of love Ashima and Ahei. In the novel, Ashima is depicted as a Yunnan girl from Yi's family. She was named Ashima because her parents hoped she would be as beautiful as a flower and shine like gold. Her dancing and singing skills were astonishing to lots of men. The son of an evil landlord, Azhi, also in love with her, but Ashima has fallen in love with Ahei, Asima's parents' adopted son. When Ashima was kidnapped by Azhi and forced to marry him, Ahei came to save Ashima. He has a battle with Azhi in three nights. Azhi released three tigers to kill Ahei, but it was dead by Ahei's arrows. Unfortunately, Azhi raised the floodgate and drowned Ashima. When Ahei called her, Ashima had transformed into a stone statue.

Zhongwen linked his love story with Ahei's own, but in a different context. Ahei and Ashima's love for the legend was hindered by caste discrimination, while religious differences hindered Zhongwen's love for Asma. Zhongwen's sacrifice to convert to Islam and leave his family in China was a form of struggle to reverse the story of Ashima that had to be separated and ended tragically. However, Zhongwen's story turned into a happy ending.

Chineseness and Islamicness are arguably the two most commodified and visible identities in Indonesian markets today, particularly in popular literature (Budianta, 2007). It can be assumed that Asma Nadia, as the author of Islamic literature, promotes Islam through the intersection of Chinese and Islamic values not only to legitimate the Islamic values but also to gain commercial profit. As Bourdieu argued, Habitus Asma Nadia as a Muslim writer hints at her to see the present phenomena about Islamicness and Chinese, evaluate and control her representation in *Assalamualaikum Beijing* by emphasizing the cultural hybridity of both.

4. Conclusion

The representation of women and gender relations, modern lifestyles, and the cultural hybridity of Chinese and Islam is how the contemporary Islamic novel *Assalamualaikum Beijing* persists and legitimates the core Islamic values. As "*rahmatan lil' allamiin.*" Habitus of Islam and the author's agency as the Muslim writer have shown how and under what conditions Islam is performed and negotiated in various ways in the present decade. Given the multiple motivations, processes, and outcomes of such the core Islamic values negotiation, it can be said that a growing public manifestation of Islamic values in the novel, as shown in its combination of women ideal image in feminism and Islam. Islamic values and modern lifestyles and intersecting Chinese and Islamic values are also undergoing a period of fluidity. Islamic icons such as the landmark novel *Assalamualaikum Beijing* suggest that the contemporary image of Indonesian Islamicism is melted between old-fashioned and up-to-date. The multiple perspectives and ideological contradictoriness of popular Islamic novels such as *Assalamualaikum Beijing* reproduce what is so exciting and discouraging about Islam in Indonesia today — the emergence of the famous label about Islam that has been repressed in the recent decade. However, whether discussion of core Islamic values "*Islam as rahmatan Lil Alamin,*" Islam is a mercy for all creatures still relevant today and play a key role in Islamic's ongoing process of social, cultural, and political renegotiation..

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