

***PEPELING*: WHAT MAKES THE EPIGRAPHS AT THE GRAVESITES OF JAVANESE MUSLIM SAINTS LINGUISTICALLY UNIQUE FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF DEATHSCAPES?**

SF. Luthfie Arguby PURNOMO*¹

Abdulloh HADZIQ²

Abd. HALIM³

Rustam IBRAHIM⁴

SF. Lukfianka Sanjaya PURNAMA⁵

Lilik UNTARI⁶

UIN Raden Mas Said, Surakarta, Indonesia

¹luthfiearguby@staff.uinsaid.ac.id*

²hadziq.abdulloh@gmail.com

³abdoelhalim99@gmail.com

⁴rustamibrahimalfatih@gmail.com

⁵lukfiankasanjaya@staff.uinsaid.ac.id

⁶lilik.untari@staff.uinsaid.ac.id

Manuscript received 14 July 2022

Manuscript accepted 21 November 2022

**Corresponding author*

<https://doi.org/10.33736/ils.4786.2022>

ABSTRACT

The gravesites of Javanese Muslim saints have signage called *pepeling*, epigraphs containing wise words from the deceased saints. This article attempts to elucidate the uniqueness of *pepeling* from deathscapes, linguistic landscapes specifically concerning lingual and non-lingual elements of mortality. We employed the theories of deathscapes by Maddrell and Sidaway (2010), the language of the cemetery by Deering (2010), wise quotes by DeFrank et al. (2019), and ethnic markers by Bell and Paegle (2021) to reveal the linguistic uniqueness of *pepeling* found from the gravesites of 21 Javanese Muslim saints. We found that *pepeling* was linguistically unique for three reasons. First, *pepeling* tends to contain a combination of Javanese or Indonesian ethnic markers with references to Islamic teaching. The presence of *pegon*, a Javanese expression written in an Arabic text, signifies this combination. Second, the places where *pepeling* are

installed signify an implied lingual meaning. They encompass geographical area, cemetery complex, and *pepeling's* directional positions. Third, *pepeling* tends to contain second viewpoint signifying the roles of the saints as a guide for the people even in their death. These findings may contribute to the fusion of gnomologia with deathscapes.

Keywords: deathscapes; epigraphs; ethnic markers; linguistic landscapes; *pepeling*

Introduction

In her study of language of cemetery, Deering (2010) found out that adult and child participants of her research tend to have different views on cemetery. The adults perceive cemetery as a source of emotion and learning, whereas the children as a source of horror. These findings point out that lingual and non-lingual elements in the cemetery like epitaphs, epigraphs, and the other death and dying related symbols have significant effects on cemetery visitors. They can emotionally connect themselves to the deceased, educationally learn the meaning behind death, and sensationally trigger a horror nuance. The significance is intact when the cemetery or the gravesite houses important figures like saints.

In the context of Javanese deathscapes, the gravesites of the Muslim saints tend to have epigraphs aimed at advising or educating the living. These epigraphs are called *pepeling*. This word is derived from Javanese words *meling* (to advise) and *eling* (to remember God). In short, *pepeling* aims at advising those who read it with life lessons and at making them remember God. The holistic meaning of *pepeling* requires ones to comprehend not only the writings but also the Islamic sources of the writings, the choice of the languages, the media on which the *pepeling* is carved, and the place and the position to which the *pepeling* is installed. In short, *pepeling* is an epigraph that considers deathscapes to evoke particular nuance to the pilgrims.

Figure 1

Pepeling in Sunan Dradjat's gravesite



The example of *pepeling* in Javanese says as follows:

wenehono teken marang wong kang wuto
 give a walking stick to the blind
wenehono pangan marang wong kang keluwen
 give food to the hungry
wenehono payung marang wong kang kaudanan
 give an umbrella to those wet by the rain
wenehono sandang marang wong kang kawudan
 give clothes to the naked

Figure 1 is the *pepeling* of Sunan Dradjat, one of the Nine Javanese Muslim Saints. The *pepeling* is installed on the roof of his Javanese house styled grave. The *pepeling* roots from the Holy Qur'an chapter 2:177, 107:3, and 7:26. The use of Javanese language to explain these Islamic teachings points out that the *pepeling* attempts to ease the transmission of Islamic teachings to the Javanese. The historical background of Sunan Dradjat also influences the use of Javanese language in transmitting the Islamic teachings. The saint was well known as the saint who promoted cultural approach in preaching Islamic teachings such as music through *gamelan* and folk song. His grave is constructed in Javanese house style along with the *pepeling* installed on the roof. This signifies the domestication of transmitting Islamic teachings. In the context of proxemics, installing a *pepeling* on the roof emphasizes the degree of importance of the messages. The combination of these linguistic, para-linguistic, and non-linguistic elements in constructing and evoking the meaning of the *pepeling* is the gap left in the studies on epigraph.

Previous studies discussing Islamic epigraphy from the perspectives of deathscapes generally circumnavigate around the characteristics of epigraphs (Gallop, 2002), epigraphs as an Islamic community identifier (Balkan, 2018; Hunter, 2015), and epigraphs in local argot (Buturovic, 2016).

The study aimed to reveal the linguistic uniqueness of *pepeling* regarding the deathscapes where the *pepelings* are located.

In this study, the theories of deathscapes by Maddrell and Sidaway (2010), the language of the cemetery by Deering (2010), wise quotes by DeFrank et al. (2019), and ethnic markers by Bell and Paegle (2021) were employed. The first theory was used to reveal how the positions, locations, and enclaves of the deathscapes in Javanese Muslim saint's gravesites might influence the meaning evoked by the epigraphs. The second theory was used to identify how *pepeling* might work regarding the functions of emotion, learning, and entertainment. The third theory was used to reveal whether the *pepelings* fall into weak or strong quotes. The fourth theory was used to reveal what ethnic markers were used by the *pepelings* regarding the weak and strong quotes, the functions, and the deathscapes.

Method

The data of this qualitative study were the verbal, visual, and operative elements of *pepelings* taken from the gravesites of 21 Javanese Muslim saints. Table 1 shows the list of the saints and their gravesite locations.

Table 1

List of the Saints and Their Gravesite Locations

Saints	Locations
Raden Qasim (Sunan Drajat)	Drajat Village, Pacitan District, Lamongan City, East Java Province
Syaikh Umar Said (Sunan Muria)	Colo Village, Dawe District, Kudus City, Central Java Province
Syaikh Hasan Munadi	Nyatnyono Village, West Ungaran District, Semarang City, Central Java Province
Hadratussyaikh KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari	Cukir Village, Diwek District, Jombang City, East Java Province
KH. Muslim Rifa'i Imampuro (Mbah Liem)	Toso Village, Karanganyam District, Klaten City, Central Java Province
Syaikh Syamsudin Ki Lembah Manah	Tegal Arum Village, Tegal City, Central Java Province
Mbah Ahmad Mutamakkin	Kajen Village, Margoyoso District, Pati City, Central Java Province
KH. Ahmad Basyir	Jekulo Village, Kudus City, Central Java Province
KH. Muhammad Ilyas	Sokaraja Village, Banyumas District, Central Java Province
Sunan Bonang	Putri Cempo Cemetery, Pasujudan Sunan Bonang, Lasem Village, Rembang City, Central Java Province
Muhammad Ashral (Wali Gendhon)	Kauman Village, Kesesi District, Pekalongan City, Central Java Province
Pangeran Benowo (Sultan Prabuwijaya)	Morotoko Village, Pucakwangi District, Pati City, Central Java Province
Raden Toemenggoeng Dendanegara	Gunung Wangi Village, Argapura District, Majalengka City, West Java Province
Habib Syaikh Abu Bakar	Pulau Panjang Village, Jepara District, Central Java Province
Ki Ageng Pengging (Kebo Kenanga)	Boyolali City, Central Java Province
Abdurrahman Wahid (Gusdur)	Jombang City, East Java Province
KH. Hamim Tohari Djazuli (Gus Miek)	Ngadi Village, Mojo District, Kediri City, East Java Province

Syaikhona Kholil Bangkalan	Bangkalan City, Madura District, East Java Province
KH. Abdul Karim	Lirboyo Village, East Java Province
KH. Mahrus Ali	Lirboyo Village, East Java Province
KH. Marzuki Dahlan	Lirboyo Village, East Java Province

Verbal data were the axis of meaning making significance with visual and operative data as the complements of meaning signification. The classification of verbal, visual, and operative data was based on the language of cemetery theory by Deering (2010). Verbal data refer to the Javanese, Indonesian, Arabic, or *pegon* inscriptions of the *pepeling*, visual to the images accompanying the inscriptions, and operative to their kinesics and proxemics that accompany the *pepelings*.

Data analysis technique by Spradley (2016) was implemented in this study. Four phases of analysis were conducted, namely, domain, taxonomy, componential, and cultural theme. In the first phase, domain analysis, the deathscape theory by Maddrell and Sidaway (2010) was applied to analyse which verbal, visual, and operative elements were classifiable as deathscape data. In the second phase, taxonomy, the theory of ethnic markers by Bell and Paegle (2021) was applied to analyse whether the *pepelings* indicated particular ethnic references. In the third phase, componential analysis, the theory of wise (DeFrank et al., 2019) was applied to categorise the wise quotes as engraved on the *pepelings*. In the last phase, finding cultural theme, the findings from the first, second, and third phases were connected to reveal the significance of *pepelings* in delivering particular messages through aphoric wise quotes from the deceased saints to the living pilgrimages.

Results and Discussion

This section is divided into three parts to indicate the linguistic uniqueness of *pepelings* in the gravesites of Javanese Muslim saints. The first section deals with the verbal elements of the *pepelings*, the second with visual elements, and the third with operative elements.

Verbal elements of Pepelings

The verbal elements of *pepelings* are constructed through wise quotes. Based on the theory of DeFrank et al. (2019), the *pepelings* are delivered through second point of view. The use of this viewpoint suggests that *pepelings* tend to be classified into strong quotes. The uses of directives and the ellipsis of “you” also strengthen the status of *pepelings* for being strong quotes. The variations on the use of directives encompass explicit and implicit directives with the former being delivered in the form of imperatives while the latter in the form of non-imperatives (declaratives). The combination of viewpoint and directive variations might evoke different sense of

meaning. Figure 2 shows a *pepeling* in the gravesite of Pangeran Benowo or also known as Sultan Prabuwijaya.

Figure 2

Pepeling in Sultan Prabuwijaya's gravesite



The *pepeling*, *ngalah slo sumeleh*, means “yield (from arguments) and submit (to what has God decreed, decrees, and will decree)”. *Ngalah* reflects Qur’an Chapter 3:159 while *sumeleh* reflects Chapter 65:3. This *pepeling* is a strong quote since it uses the second viewpoint in an elliptical fashion. That it uses imperative directive also signifies the strength of the quote. The elliptical second viewpoint is seen from the absence of “you” and the imperative directive is seen from *ngalah slo sumeleh*. That the *pepeling* board is installed on the top of the grave of the sultan sends the message that the saint was advising the pilgrims to implement the *pepeling* in their life. The absence of “you” also indicates the emphasis over politeness in delivering an advice. The politeness is perceived from Javanese speaking culture which tends to be indirect in delivering advice. This indirectness in advising a person is employed to prevent the feeling of being hurt.

The use of Javanese *ngoko*, the language used by a teacher to a student, a parent to a child, and a man with high social status or hierarchy to the lower, signifies further the teacher-student, parent-child, and revered figure-admirer relationship. These three relationships evoked from the use of Javanese further strengthen the status of the *pepeling* as a strong quote since the saint acts as a teacher, a parent, and a revered or respected figure. These three positions hold significant influences in Javanese society and culture. That Prabuwijaya was a sultan conforms to the use of Javanese *ngoko* as an ethnic marker; it indicates that he was a figure revered by Javanese. Moreover, in the historical perspectives, *ngalah slo sumeleh* is embodied throughout the life of Sultan Prabuwijaya. The embodiment of the *pepeling* can be seen from how he accepted the fate when his father’s kingdom was invaded by his foster brother. This

quote and life narrative alignment strengthens the *pepeling* since the *pepeling* is an example the sultan had set before he suggested it to his people.

The effect of using Javanese *ngoko* as an ethnic marker to indicate how a revered figure from a royal family delivers an advice and the effect of using an elliptical second viewpoint to avoid inferior feelings from the advised point out that the combination of lingual elements could create a different sense of advices. If the *pepeling* is delivered through the use of national language such as Bahasa Indonesia or religiously treated language such as Arabic, the effects might be different in a sense that they could not indicate the status of being a leader who has to lead the life of his people. Moreover, the historical and cultural effects of the *pepeling* might have not been captured if the *pepeling* had not been delivered in Javanese.

A different effect is captured from a *pepeling* with *pegon* lettering. Figure 3 shows an example of *pepeling* installed on the eastern part of Lirboyo gravesite.

Figure 3

An Example of Pegon



The *pepeling* is in the form of *fatwa* or religious decree issued by KH. Marzuqi Dahlan and KH. Mahrus Aly. The Arabic heading says *i'lan* which means “announcement” while the content of the announcement is in the form of *pegon* – syntactically Arabic but semantically Javanese. The announcement says:

1. *Poro santri dipun larang miridaken Sholawat Wahidiyah*
Students are prohibited from reciting *Sholawat Wahidiyah*
2. *Ngaos kitab ingkang dereng pangkatipun*
Reading religious books before allowed to do so

The gravity of the messages is apparently intense due to the use of Arabic syntax. Since *santri*, a Muslim student who learns at an Islamic boarding school, is considered to be fluent in Arabic and Javanese, the use of *pegon* helps the *santri* comprehend the *pepeling* better. That the *pepeling* is a religious decree also supports the strong quote categorisation. The use of *pegon* also further strengthens the quote. The Arabic syntax emits the gravity of the messages while the Javanese semantics evokes a personal identity or intimacy of the message receivers.

If *pegon* has the sense of being identical to *santri* and *pesantren*, *pepeling* delivered in a national language such as Bahasa Indonesia emits a different nuance. If the *pepeling* is delivered by a figure whose contributions is not only on local scale but also national scale, the use of Bahasa Indonesia might fit in delivering the advice. One of the examples is *pepeling* found from the gravesite of Kiai Muslim Rifa'i or nationally known as Mbah Liem, a revered religious figure in Indonesia from Nahdlatul Ulama (*Ulama* Awakening). Nahdlatul Ulama is the largest Islamic organisation in Indonesia and in the world with 90 million members. It was established in 31 January 1926 by K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari. In the gravesite of Mbah Liem, the *pepeling* says as follows:

Meski Beda Agama Sekalipun Toh:

- a) *Sesama Hamba Allah*
- b) *Sesama Anak Cucu Eyang Nabiyullah Adam As*
- c) *Sesama Penghuni NKRI Pancasila*

*12 Maulid 1428 H
30 Maret 07 M
16.17 WIB*

*Ttd
Mbah Liem RI*

The *pepeling* is roughly translated as follows:

Though Different in Religions, We are:

- a) *The Servants of Allah the Almighty*
- b) *The Children of Prophet Adam Peace and Blessing be Upon Him*
- c) *The Citizens of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia*

*12 Maulid 1428 H
30 March 2007 AD
16.17 PM*

*Signed
Mbah Liem RI*

The messages delivered through *pepeling* engraved on a marble epitaph advise the readers to remain united in differences. These messages are the embodiment of the Indonesian national slogan *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* or “Unity in Diversity”. That the messages are engraved on Mbah Liem’s *pepeling* signifies the concerns of Mbah Liem over the potential problems Indonesia might face – disunity. Mbah Liem was a *kyai*, a revered Islamic scholar, of Nahdlatul Ulama, one of two Islamic organisations that helped the founding of the Republic of Indonesia. Throughout his life, he promoted how Muslims should live in harmony with the other Muslims and the other believers to strengthen the unity of Indonesia. One of the ways to signify the unity of Indonesia is the use of Bahasa Indonesia. The use of Bahasa Indonesia as a way to deliver these messages of unity strengthens the sense of “Unity in Diversity” since Bahasa Indonesia functions as a unitary national language in Indonesia spoken to bridge the speakers of more than 700 local languages in the archipelago.

The use of an elliptic second viewpoint and implicit directive as seen from the missing imperative sentences signifies the same polite manner of a teacher advising his students and of a fellow citizen advising the other citizens as what is found on Sultan Prabuwijaya’s *pepeling*. Though ethnic markers are absent from the *pepeling*, due to the use of national language, that the messages are delivered in an indirect fashion signify the Javanesque of the *pepeling*. The Javanesque indirectness further signifies the *kyai* status of Mbah Liem. Yet this Javanesque nuance is not captured from the epistolary fashion of the writing. The use of this epistolary fashion for the *pepeling*, besides reflecting Mbah Liem’s habit in writing letters, also emphasises the personal concerns Mbah Liem has over national problems.

Visual elements of Pepeling

Since *pepeling* is engraved on a placate of various materials with various shapes and forms, it suggests that meaning making process is made through the combination of verbal and visual elements. The concerns over visual elements encompass not only the materials and shapes of the placates where the *pepelings* are engraved but also the typography of the writings. The following example (Figure 4) shows how the visual elements of *pepelings* signify the meaning-making process of *pepelings*.

Figure 4

Placate of KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari's Pepeling



Figure 4 is a *pepeling* on the gravesite of the founder of Nahdlatul Ulama, Kyai Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari Al Hajj. The writing of the *pepeling* was engraved by referring to his one of many religious writings entitled the Book of Tanbihat Al Wajibat liman Yashna' al-Maulid bi al-Munkarat (the Book about Warnings over Sharia Violating Acts in Commemorating the Birthday of the Prophet Peace be Upon Him). This book is a warning for those who mix sharia violating acts with blessed acts of commemorating the birthday of the Prophet Peace be Upon Him. This warning is engraved on the placate which says

*Jika suatu amal tidak dilandasi keikhlasan
Maka tidak akan tambah
Kecuali kegelapan di dalam hati*

*Barang siapa yang berserah diri pada Allah
Maka Allah akan berpihak kepadanya*

Literally translated as follows:

*If a deed is not constructed on the foundation of sincerity
None will flourish
Except the darkness within the heart*

*Whoever submits themselves to Allah
Allah will stand beside them*

The warning as seen from the *pepeling* is not written in an imperative nor explicit fashion. It is elegantly written in a non-imperative and implicit fashion implying the universalism of the warning. That the first stanza employs a conditional sentence sending the message that the *pepeling* leaves the choices to the readers. On the other hand, through the use of implicit "if" and the use of "whoever" evoke a stronger quote than the first line. It implies that if one does as advised, Allah will help them. The combination of two strong quotes as seen from the *pepeling* evokes a stronger sense of the quote as the *pepeling* is engraved in a granite stone. Symbolically it signifies the gravity of the warning. That the granite is shaped in the fashion of official inscription, as seen from the gold inked writings and the square shape, further strengthens the gravity of the warning. That Kyai Hasyim is a national hero, a father to the first minister of religious affairs, and a father to the fourth president of the republic to some extent align with the governmental fashion of the *pepeling* inscription. Before being engraved in governmental inscription like fashion, the *pepeling* was written on a wooden inscription (Figure 5).

Figure 5

Wooden Inscription of KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari's Pepeling



The gravity of warning is not as strong as the granite-engraved *pepeling* since the wood and the writing tend to be weak against fading drives like weather though the quote is still categorised as a strong quote. Chalk writing fashion of the *pepeling* also weakens the quote strength but to some extent it emits the sense of teaching-learning fashion in a general school or a *madrassa*. These findings point out that visual elements e.g. typography and the engraving materials influence the nuance of the quotes and they might weaken or strengthen the quotes.

Operative elements of Pepeling

Operative elements deal with proxemic and kinesic elements of *pepeling*. In the context of *pepeling* in the gravesites, the former refers to the distance between the *pepeling* with the readers and the latter to the *touchability* of the *pepeling*. These two elements work in tandem to evoke a particular meaning on how the messages of the *pepeling* reach the readers. The following example from Ki Ageng Pengging's gravesite might help comprehend the statement. In the gravesite, pilgrims could see the *pepeling* from afar since the epigraph is located on a broken tree bending over the gravesite (Figure 6). This position weaves a meaning making proxemically and kinetically with the messages engraved on the *pepeling* which says

OJO DUMEH...!

OJO RUMONGSO BISO

BISO RUMONGSO

Literally translated into:

Don't look down on others!

Don't think what you can do to you!

Think what you can do for others!

Figure 6

Ki Ageng Pengging's Gravesite



The position of the *pepeling* on the trunk of a broken tree suggests that even a mighty tree could fall down and thereby, being arrogant is wrong. Installing the *pepeling* higher than the grave that compels the visitors to look up to read the *pepeling* evokes a meaning that above a sky, there is still another sky. This message suggests that men have no rights to be arrogant since they are insignificant before God. That the *pepeling* is out of reach for touch strengthens the advice for not being arrogant. It further suggests that what ones can see is not always what they can get. That the *pepeling* is engraved in a capital typography further strengthens the advices.

Historically this *pepeling* to some extent reflects the life of Ki Ageng Pengging or well known also as Raden Kebo Kenanga. The title *raden* signifies his royal family status while the title *ki* signifies his religious and cultural knowledge. The combination of these titles points out that Ki Ageng Pengging had significant knowledge of worldly and heavenly matters. His *pepeling ojo dumeh, ojo rumongso biso, and biso rumongso* might be related to this credible knowledge that he had and to the story of his death. Ki Ageng Pengging was accused of subversion against Raden Patah, the king of Demak, who was also the lord Ki Ageng Pengging had to routinely pay a visit and tribute to. When it was decreed that Ki Ageng Pengging had to be sentenced to death, he did not refuse nor fight back. He selflessly gave his life though with his knowledge and power he could resist and declare a war against Demak. His selflessness and sacrifice are aligned with the messages of the *pepeling*.

The problems of the status of signage as pepeling and signage with Pepeling force

Linguistic landscapes, as implied by Lanza and Woldemariam (2008), revolve not only around the significance of lingual elements in public spheres through public signage but also the identity and ideology evoked through the messages. In the context of death sphere (e.g., graveyard, cemetery, or gravesite), the identity and the ideology of the deceased, the community where the deceased is affiliated, and the final resting place of the deceased, as implied by Maddrell and Siddaway (2010) and Buturovic (2016), are signified through the signage representing the deceased. The representing signage is primarily constructed through epigraphs.

Signage in deathscape context tend to be diverse in variation. It ranges, as implied by Maddrell and Sidaway (2010), from instructive signs (e.g., no littering) to declarative signs (e.g., the name of the deceased) to implicative signs (e.g., epigraphs). In the context of deathscapes in the gravesites of Javanese Muslim saints, the differences between which signs could be considered as *pepeling* and which signs could not be is confusing. This confusion might occur since some signs have an implied *pepeling* force. Figure 7 shows an example.

Figure 7

Pepeling Force in the Gravesite of Sunan Muria



The sign says “To all guests, please, drink water from the water barrel relic of Sunan Muria”. Javanese people believe that artifacts left by saints have an implied spiritual meaning. They could take a lesson from those artifacts. In the past Javanese put their *gentong* or water barrels in front of their houses or yards to allow any travelers to drink or to perform ablution (*wudhu*). This old wisdom tends to gradually fade from Javanese society and the sign emphasises this concern. Though the sign is engraved in the fashion of common instructive signs, it has a *pepeling* force. That the *gentong* was the relic, remnant or legacy of a saint strengthens the *pepeling* force of the sign. The status of being a relic tends to invite rituals in relation to the relic (Buturovic, 2016). The presence of the sign delivered in an instructive fashion with Javanese-styled Indonesian addressing of *para tamu* or “to guests” instead of “visitors”, exclamative signs and

politeness marker of *silahkan* or “please” emit a strong level of persuasion. Through this persuasion, the ritual of consuming water from the *gentong* might take place.

In the context of deathscapes, any “dead texts” e.g. obituary, memorial books, epitaphs, epigraphs and the other related “dead texts” tend to function as spatial remainder (Newstok, 2009). *Pepeling* also serves as spatial reminder since this “dead text” reminds the living about walking through life for a blessed death from the perspectives of Islam. In regard to “spatial”, the position, the location, the enclave, and the length of *pepeling* might signify the meaning of the message. These “spatial” concerns influence the proxemics (distance) and haptics (touch) of the pilgrims in capturing, comprehending, and experiencing the messages in restricted spaces. These restrictions on space to deliver the epigraphs signify the installation of minimal syntax with maximum forces – aphorism (Hui, 2019). This aphoric sense of *pepeling* signifies further the role of *pepeling* as a part of linguistic landscape’s signage.

Another problem regarding the status of a sign as a *pepeling* evokes from the place where the sign is installed. As shown in the earlier examples, *pepeling* tends to be installed close to the graves of the saints or as a part of the *cungkup* or the grave house. Thus, a sign that functions as a *pepeling* but not attached or close to the *cungkup* might generate a question whether the sign is a *pepeling* or not. The following sign from Sunan Muria’s gravesite might clarify the statement (Figure 8).

Figure 8

Pepeling in the Corridor to the Grave



The writing on the left says *KE MAKAM* literally translated “to the grave”. The writing is a sign to reach the grave of Sunan Muria. The writing that says “*HANYA BERDOA/MEMOHON KEPADA ALLAH SWT*” meaning “only pray/plead to Allah the Almighty” is a *pepeling* in a sense that it works as a reminder to ask anything only to Allah. However, that this *pepeling* is not close to or not attached to the grave of Sunan Muria serves more in general as a sign with *pepeling* force. The sign is a reminder not to perform any religiously unlawful acts during the pilgrimage.

The signage in deathscapes, as implied by Strangstad (2013), should be made minimum to ease the comprehension of the messages. This requirement is aligned with

the characteristics of *pepeling* engraved in aphoric nuance that requires short expressions to fit the placates to deal with the spatial restrictions. The restrictions in the context of linguistic landscapes compel the sign makers to prioritise what should be craved on the signs. Hermer (2002) studied signage in parks, and found that priority is given to safety and health risk. In gravesites, the priority is giving advice in aphorism or *pepeling* in Javanese. This priority on psychological and religious writings points out that public places have their identities reflected through signage. The signs in the context of identity, function as identity markers indicating that every sign in a public place creates a web of meaning from which an identity is perceived (Gorter, 2013). See Figure 9.

In deathscapes, this web of meaning is perceivable from the macro level of the gravesite itself and the micro levels (e.g., epitaphs and epigraphs). The combination between the micro and macro levels of meaning making requires verbal, visual, and operative considerations. The first consideration deals with linguistic elements (e.g., the engraved writing on tomb stones), the second with the image associated with the gravesites (e.g., tomb stone shape or symbols), the third with how the signage in the gravesites is accessed (e.g., positions, sizes, and engraving materials). In tandem, these elements function as a meaning making device in micro and macro level.

In the context of objects in the graveyard, different positions might hold different significances (Strangstad, 2013). Thereby, to signify the meaning or particular signs, ones have to relate the sign with the places and the positions where they are installed. Moreover, when the sign is installed along with the other signs, the signs must be signified as a web of meaning.

Figure 9

A Web of Meaning in a Web of Signage in Sunan Muria's Gravesite



Figure 9 shows a signage that encompass three types of signs, namely, greeting, codes of conducts, and direction. *SELAMAT DATANG DI MAKAM SUNAN MURIA* literally translated into “welcome to the grave of Sunan Muria” is the greeting sign. Three signs with the largest one on the back-center and the two with pictures are the codes of conducts. The sign saying “MASUK MAKAM” translated into “entrance to the grave” is

the direction sign. The most dominant signs installed on the site are code of conduct. The codes of conduct cover norms-related issues such as dress codes and *sharia* laws, health protocols, and documentation issues. If these signs are related to the previous sign of praying-to-Allah sign, then, a web of related meaning and significances is captured – the pilgrims have to behave in the gravesite.

Conclusion

Pepeling is a linguistically unique epigraph in a sense that the meaning of the verbal messages is related to visual and operative elements. These three elements are further signified by the history that becomes the background of the Javanese Muslim saints. The messages of *pepelings* are verbally delivered in second viewpoint indicating that the *pepelings* are categorised into strong quotes. As a strong quote, it points out that the *pepeling* is a “living” suggestion or advice from the deceased saints, which is still relevant to the present day. These strong quotes are supported and signified by the use of either Arabic, Javanese, Bahasa Indonesia, or *pegon* letters. Each letter evokes a different meaning when connected to the strong quotes. Arabic letters strengthen the religiosity of the messages, Javanese letters the locality of the messages, Bahasa Indonesia the nationality of the messages, and *pegon* the combination of religiosity and locality of the messages. These messages are all linked to the Qur’anic verses. Further research can address the possibilities of typologisation of *pepeling* as a part of deathscapes. The typology can adopt gnomiglia, the studies of wise quotes, as the point of departure in classifying the *pepelings*. The findings of the research can be used as a reference in designing the intended typology.

References

- Balkan, O. (2018). The Islamic deathscapes of Germany. *The politics of Islam in Europe and North America. POMEPS Studies*, 32, 39.
- Bell, A. V., & Paegle, A. (2021). Ethnic markers and how to find them. *Human Nature*, 32(2), 470-481. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12110-021-09401-z>
- Buturovic, A. (2016). *Carved in stone, etched in memory: Death, tombstones and commemoration in Bosnian Islam since c. 1500*. Routledge.
- Deering, B. (2010). From anti-social behaviour to X-rated: Exploring social diversity and conflict in the cemetery. In J. D. Sidaway & A. Maddrel (Eds.), *Deathscapes: Spaces for death, dying mourning and remembrance* (pp. 93-112). Routledge.
- DeFrank, M., Bivona, M., Chiaraluce, B., & Kahlbaugh, P. (2019). The language of wisdom understood through an analysis of wise quotes. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 38(3), 376-389. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X19831743>
- Gallop, A. T. (2002). *Malay seal inscriptions: A study in Islamic epigraphy from Southeast Asia* (Publication No. 0000 0000 6761 4091) [Doctoral dissertation, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London].

- Gorter, D. (2013). Linguistic landscapes in a multilingual world. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 33, 190-212. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190513000020>
- Hermer, J. (2002). *Regulating Eden: The nature of order in North American parks*. University of Toronto Press.
- Hui, A. (2019). *A theory of the aphorism: From Confucius to Twitter*. Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780691190556>
- Hunter, A. (2015). Deathscapes in diaspora: Contesting space and negotiating home in contexts of post migration diversity. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 17(2), 247-261. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2015.1059472>
- Lanza, E., & Woldemariam, H. (2008). Language ideology and linguistic landscape: Language policy and globalization in a regional capital of Ethiopia. In E. Sohamay & D. Gorter (Eds.), *Linguistic Landscape* (pp. 229-245). Routledge.
- Maddrell, A., & Sidaway, J. (2010). *Deathscapes: New spaces for death, dying and bereavement*. Ashgate.
- Newstok, S. L. (2009). *Quoting death in early modern England: The poetics of Epitaphs beyond the tomb*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Spradley, J. P. (2016). *Participant observation*. Waveland Press.
- Strangstad, L. (2013). *A graveyard preservation primer*. Rowman & Littlefield.